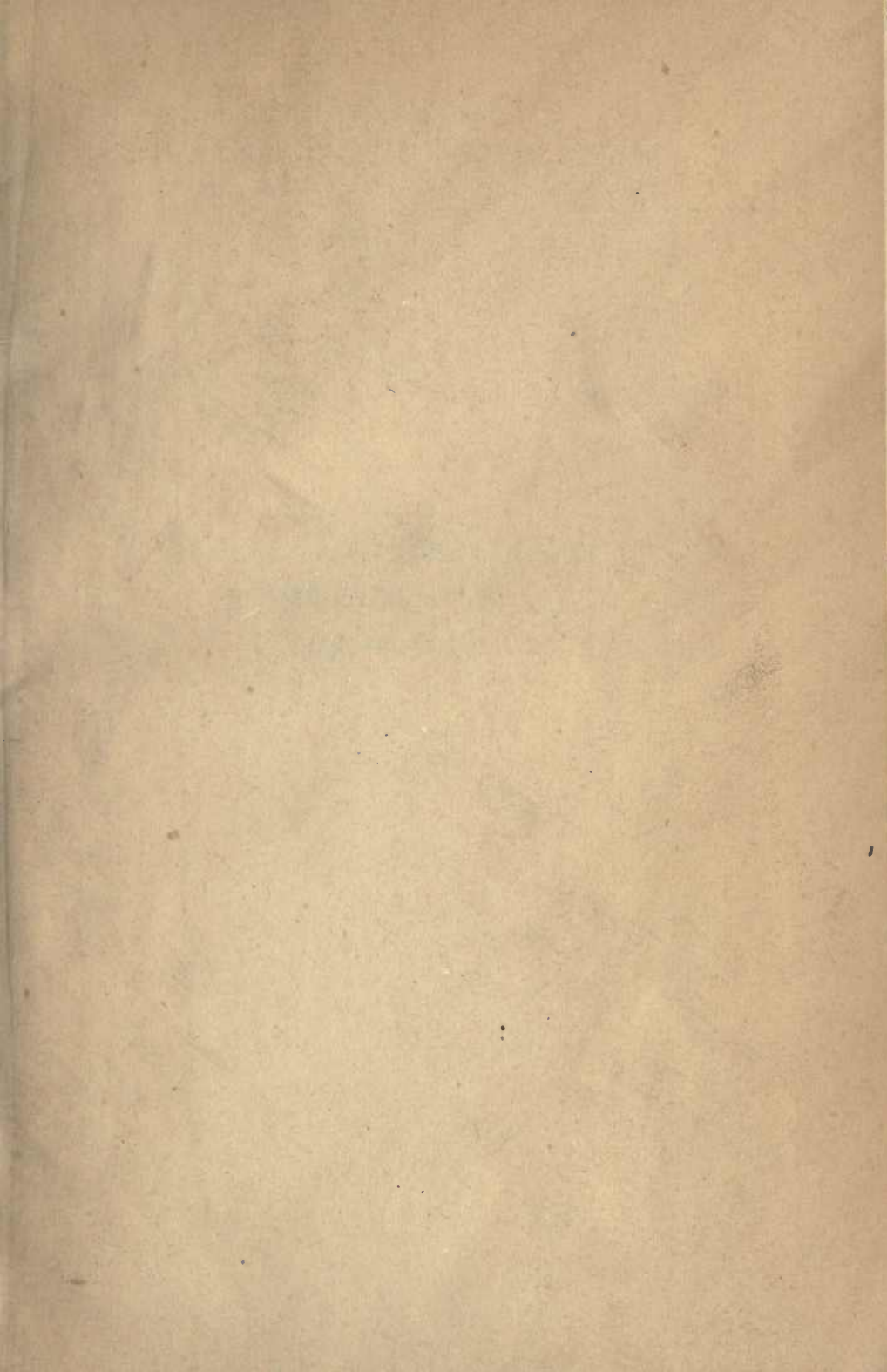
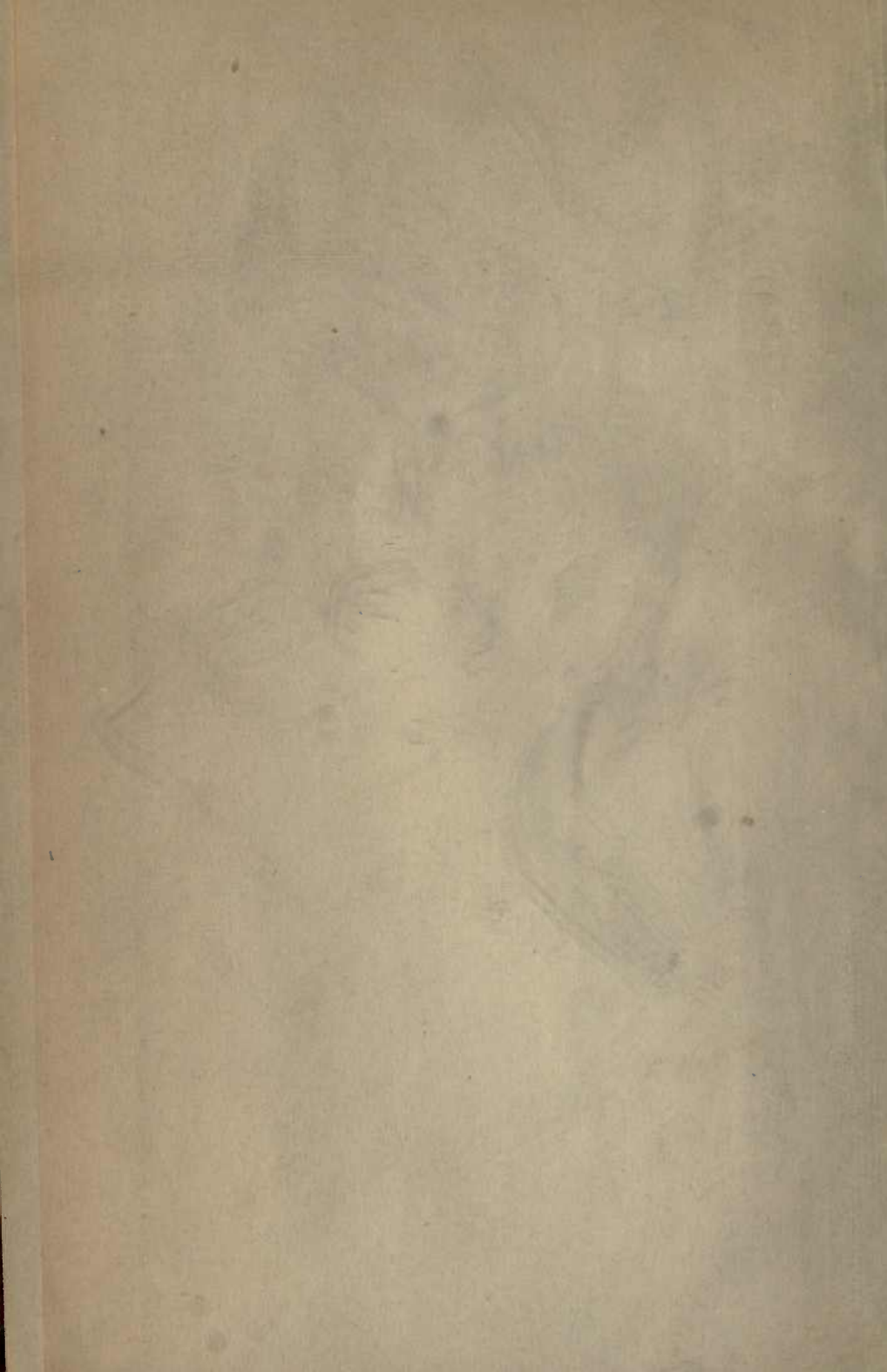




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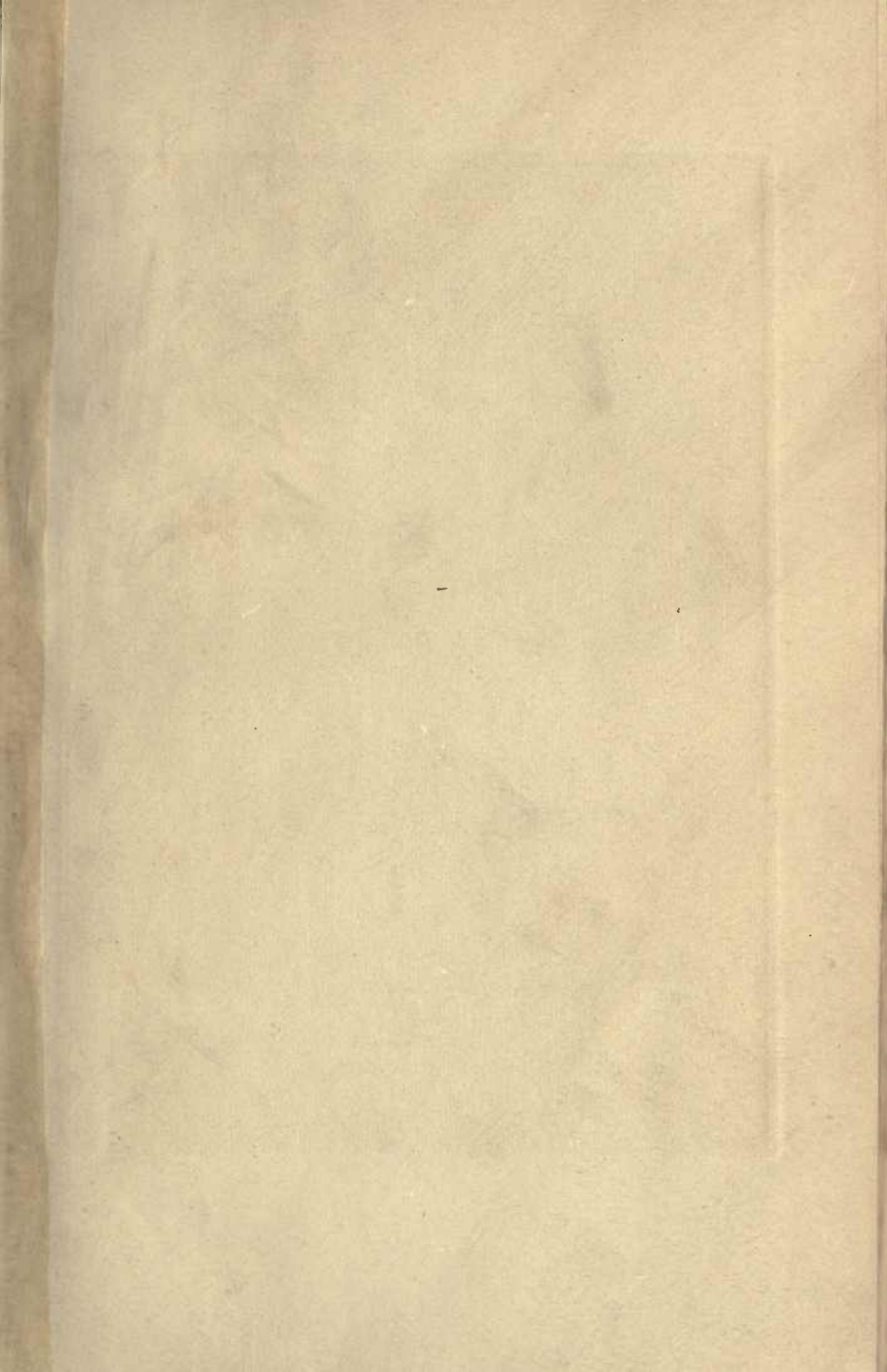






SOCIAL AND DIPLOMATIC  
MEMORIES, 1894-1901  
(Second Series)







*Earl Cromer.*  
*from a pencil drawing by the Duchess of Rutland.*

LONDON: EDWARD ARNOLD & CO



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# SOCIAL AND DIPLOMATIC MEMORIES

(Second Series)

1894-1901

EGYPT AND ABYSSINIA

BY THE RIGHT HON.

SIR JAMES RENNELL RODD, G.C.B.

185402.

13.11.23.

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD & CO.

1923

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## PREFACE

I had originally intended to conclude the record of my Social and Diplomatic Memories in a second volume. But when the story of my experiences in Egypt over a period of many years came to be written, it grew to a compass which would have left little room for a still longer subsequent period. I have therefore, in the present volume, dealt only with the Egypt of the final decade of the last and the first year of the present century, including some incidents of a mission to Abyssinia in days when that country was little known to British penetration.

During my residence in Cairo two figures dominated the Valley of the Nile, those of Lord Cromer and Lord Kitchener, and of the former little has been written since his death. His life's work was mostly accomplished away from his own country, and there were therefore relatively few who, in the days of his greatest activity, had such opportunity of knowing him intimately as I had during a close and constant official association with him of eight years. It seemed a pious duty, while memory was still fresh, to pay my tribute of affectionate regard to the Cromer that I knew. Much happened in those eight years which now belongs to history, and though I do not pretend to be a historian, the personal recollections of one who played a modest part in the episodes to which reference is made may assist and amplify historical appreciations.



After I left Cairo, at the end of 1901, I did not return there till the end of 1919, when I was invited to join the Special Mission presided over by Lord Milner. It would have been interesting to compare the situation which we were called upon to investigate, under the terms of reference, with that which prevailed when I ceased to be officially connected with Egypt eighteen years earlier. But the Egyptian question is still in a controversial stage, and the obligations on a former official impose a reticence which it is my duty to observe.

The years from 1894 to 1901 covered a period of frequently acute conflict with France, for which our occupation of Egypt was mainly responsible. It would be disingenuous to pretend to ignore that conflict in recalling memories of Egypt in the nineties. To-day it may even serve an useful purpose to review with all goodwill past misunderstandings in regard to which, as we can now see more clearly, the tradition of Bismarckian policy, less adroitly handled, was not disinterested in envenoming controversy. It is happily possible now to look back without prejudice on the vicissitudes which preceded the Anglo-French agreement of 1904, after which the Egyptian question ceased to have an embittering effect on our relations.

At the end of the last century the issue which stood out above all others in the African problem was whether a line of cleavage in the great continent should run from south to north, or from west to east. A French line from west to east, with Abyssinia as the only interruption in its sequence, could not have been established without the sundering of certain well-defined interests which we regarded as paramount. A British line from south to north was compatible with existing titles. In the end the principle was accepted by



the two former rivals that their respective spheres of interest to the east and to the west should not encroach on one another, and the elimination of further controversy on this issue prepared the way for an understanding which was later on to save the Western world in its hour of crisis. Some of the antecedents to this happy consummation may be made more comprehensible by the experiences of five-and-twenty years ago recorded in the present volume.

In the very benevolent reviews of my former volume attention has sometimes been drawn to evident reticences and to a spirit of restraint which characterises its pages. There has even been a certain suggestion of disappointment that it should not have contained more startling revelations. May I therefore here repeat that I have never in my diaries made notes from official documents which have come under my cognizance, and that although my memory is still vivid of many interesting developments in European politics, I have too great a regard for the obligations of a public servant consciously to exceed the limits which discretion prescribes? Official expressions of opinion have been recorded in official communications, which will no doubt be accessible when the proper time comes. My aim has rather been to reproduce the atmosphere in which certain interesting situations developed, and to do justice to the character of some of the principal actors as I saw them from behind the scenes. If memoirs succeed in conveying such an atmosphere, they may assist our appreciations of history.

## NOTE

In the first instalment of these Social and Diplomatic Memories, in spite of the care which was bestowed upon correction and revision, a certain number of slips or lapses of memory were overlooked, which have, I hope, been corrected in later issues. It is not necessary to draw attention to obvious misprints. But I wish to take the opportunity offered by the publication of a second instalment to rectify some of the more important errors.

Counsel for the defendant in the famous lawsuit, *Whistler v. Ruskin*, to which reference is made on page 16, was Sir John Holker, and not Sir Richard Webster. On page 35 I have by some inexplicable confusion of mind substituted the name of Harriet Ward Beecher for that of Julia Ward Howe. Again, on page 84 I have spoken of the present Lord Tennyson as the second instead of the eldest son of his father. Lord Brougham was the step-grandfather of Sir E. Malet, and not his uncle as he is said to be on page 96. The villa of Countess Arco, where Mr. Gladstone stayed in 1886, is wrongly placed on the Lake of Schliersee on page 106 ; it should be Tegernsee. On page 123 it is stated that after November, 1887, Sir M. Mackenzie "never left his patient till his death." This should have been qualified by the addition of the words, "save for a brief interval." On page 124 the year 1809 should be 1800. On page 344 La Pallice should be read instead of La Salice. On page 348, and again in the index, the name of M. van Eetvelde is misspelt.

The Empress Eugénie was present at the opening of the Suez Canal in 1868. The Emperor Napoleon III did not go to Egypt as is suggested on page 192.

# CONTENTS

PORTRAIT OF EARL CROMER . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
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(From a pencil drawing by the Duchess of Rutland)

PAGE

## CHAPTER I

1894 . . . . .	1
----------------	---

Arrival in Cairo. The Frontier Incident. The Young Khedive. Intrigue to prevent his visit to England. Cromer's views as to the future of Egypt. An appreciation of Cromer. Lady Cromer. Stories of Ismail Pasha. Personalities in Egypt in 1894. Nubar Pasha. Kitchener, etc.

## CHAPTER II

1895-96 . . . . .	44
-------------------	----

Venice. Malta. Stuart-Wortley and the reconstruction of the Egyptian army. The Agency at Cairo. Daily routine under Cromer. Social figures; Egyptian, Cosmopolitan, and British. Wilfrid Blunt. The escape of Slatin from Omdurman. Cruise in Greek islands. Sir William Butler. Italian defeat in Abyssinia. Proposals to create a diversion. Preparations for the advance to Dongola.

## CHAPTER III

1896-97 . . . . .	91
-------------------	----

The advance towards the Soudan. Conflict with the *Caisse de la Dette*. Roddy Owen arrives. Cholera in Egypt. Joseph Chamberlain at Highbury. Death of R. Owen. The Arabic press becomes aggressive. Death of Sultan of Zanzibar. Armenian massacres. Occupation of Dongola. The credit accorded by the *Caisse* refunded. Decision to despatch a Mission to Abyssinia. Situation in that country. Composition of Mission. Preparations and departure. Aden. Zeila. Lieut. Harrington.



## CHAPTER IV

PAGE

1897 . . . . .	124
----------------	-----

On the road to Shoa. The Somali desert. Italian prisoners at Biya Kaboba. Gildessa to Harrar. Ras Makonnen. To Church with the Ras. Difficulty of securing transport. News of M. Lagarde and Prince Henry of Orleans. Beauty of the Highlands. Episodes of a night march. The valley of the Hawash. The approach to Addis Abbaba. M. Ilg. The capital. Our official reception by the Emperor Menelik. Prince Henry as a correspondent and the French Press. The Coptic Bishop and the Lord Chief Justice. The Empress Taitu. Lunch at the Gêbi. Léontieff. Sources of information.

## CHAPTER V

1897 . . . . .	162
----------------	-----

Negotiations with Menelik. Abyssinian ambitions on the Nile. The festival of St. Raguel. Ritual dance of the priests. Linguistic difficulties. A treaty agreed upon. Final conversation. Relations of confidence established. Preparations for departure from Addis Abbaba. Incidents of the return journey. Spectacular demonstration on our departure. Harrar again. Negotiations with Makonnen. Harrington. Carl Inger. Homewards. The last day of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Visit to Windsor. Lord Salisbury and the situation in the Equatorial Provinces. Capture of Abou Hamed.

## CHAPTER VI

1897-98 . . . . .	192
-------------------	-----

Disturbances in the Provinces. The Sirdar and Financial difficulties. Sir Francis Grenfell. British troops go up the Nile. George Steevens. The march to Berber. Prince Henry of Prussia at Port Said. The battle of the Atbara. Serious illness of Lady Cromer. A second British Brigade formed. Frankie Rhodes and Hubert Howard. The advance to Khartoum. The battle of Omdurman. The 21st Lancers. Appendix. Lieut. R. de Montmorency's account of the battle.

## CHAPTER VII

1898 . . . . .	221
----------------	-----

Kitchener finds Captain Marchand at Fashoda. Exchange of views with Paris. K.'s interview with Marchand. *Status quo* pending his report. Marchand comes to Cairo. Antecedents of the issue. The contentions advanced by M. Delcassé, and the British case. Decision of French Government to recall Marchand. Kitchener's return to Cairo and reception in England. Death of Lady Cromer. Departure of Marchand expedition via Abyssinia. Lord Salisbury's treatment of the issue. Lord Curzon at Port Said. Cromer goes to Khartoum.



# CONTENTS

xi

## CHAPTER VIII

PAGE

1899-1900 . . . . . 247

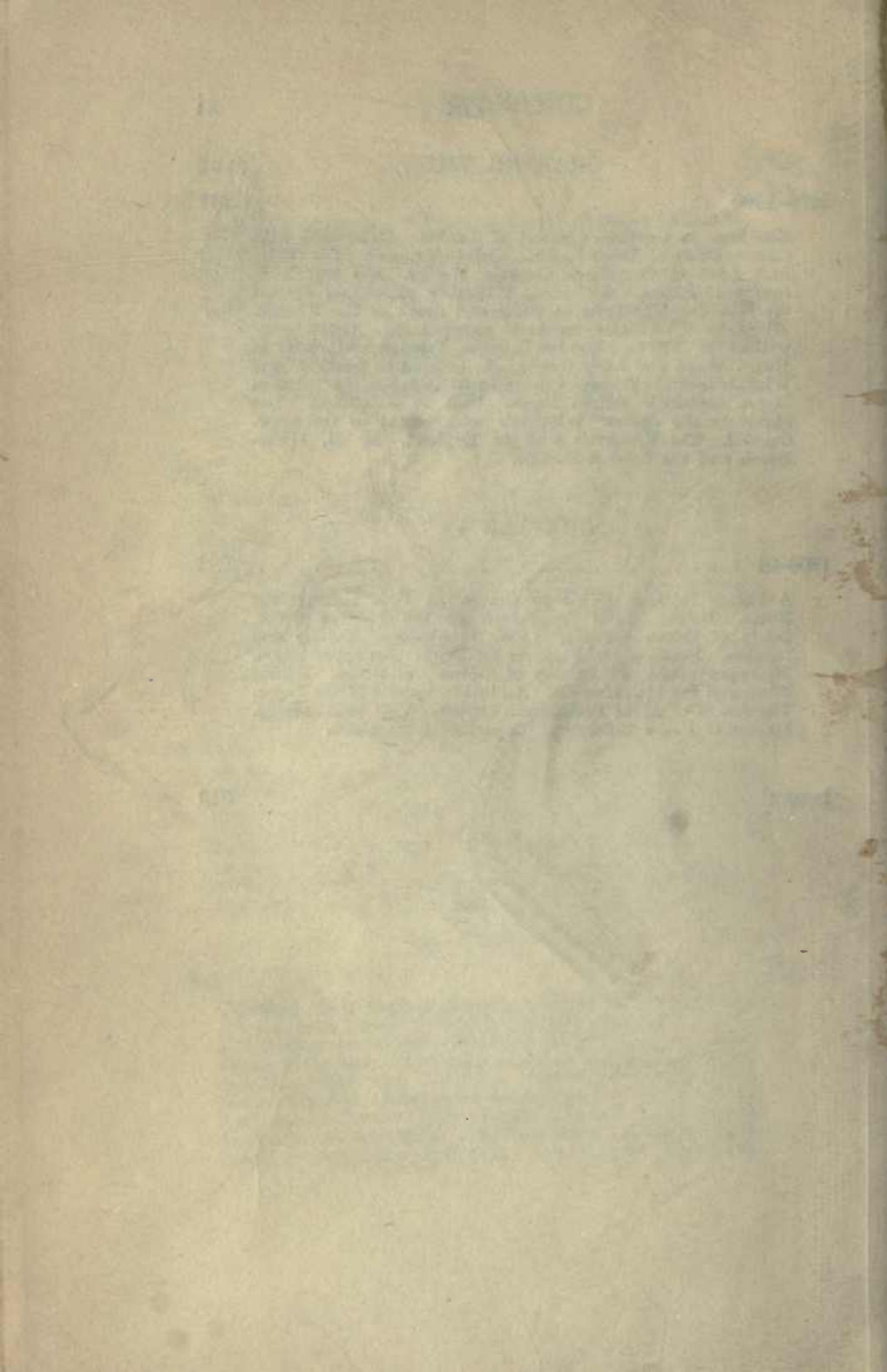
Kitchener as Governor-General of Soudan. Differences with Cairo. Death of Nubar Pasha. Visit to England. The Derby with Lord C. Beresford. Captain Wellby. His travels in equatorial Africa. His dogs. Wingate's expedition against the Khalifa. The fight at Gedir and death of the Khalifa. The Boer War. Our universal unpopularity. Greek sympathies in Egypt. Soudan-Eritrean Frontier settlement in Rome. Lord and Lady Currie. K. ordered to South Africa. Wingate becomes Sirdar. Critical situation in Soudan. Osman Digna captured. Alfred Paget. Visit to Khartoum. Two nights in the desert. Wingate's achievement as Governor-General. The Khedive's visit to England. Sir M. Hicks-Beach and the Soudan Budget.

## CHAPTER IX

1900-01 . . . . . 282

A Palace Intrigue. Visit to Greece. A Ride through the Morea. Delphi. Lord Lansdowne at the Foreign Office. Death of Queen Victoria. Leave of absence. Verona and London. Death of the Empress Frederick. An appreciation. My appointment as Secretary of Embassy at Rome. Wilfrid Blunt and the 11th Hussars. An incident and a White Paper. The return of Arabi Pasha from Ceylon. Visit to Abouteeg. Mahmoud Pasha Suleiman. Departure from Cairo.

INDEX . . . . . 313



# SOCIAL AND DIPLOMATIC MEMORIES, 1894-1901

## CHAPTER I

1894

Arrival in Cairo. The Frontier Incident. The Young Khedive. Intrigue to prevent his visit to England. Cromer's views as to the future of Egypt. An appreciation of Cromer. Lady Cromer. Stories of Ismail Pasha. Personalities in Egypt in 1894. Nubar Pasha. Kitchener, etc.

I began my eight years of official life in Egypt on the Queen's birthday, arriving in Cairo as second in command to Lord Cromer on the 24th of May, 1894. In accordance with diplomatic precedent there was a dinner party that evening at the British Agency, where I met all the leading British officials who had attained to the coveted rating which entitled them to be invited. Lady Cromer had already left for England. But the Agent and Consul-General was remaining for another month, so that I had ample time to take stock of the situation under the tuition of that remarkable man, whose work of regeneration in Egypt I had been studying in despatches and reports since 1884.

The crisis arising out of what was known as the



Frontier Incident, in which the young Khedive had for the first time shown his hand, had just taken place. He had made a progress up the river, and there had been an inspection of the Egyptian troops at the frontier. The army, reconstituted after the chaotic period of the Arabi rebellion, and trained by British officers, first under Sir Evelyn Wood and subsequently Sir Francis Grenfell,<sup>1</sup> were now commanded by Kitchener Pasha, who succeeded the latter as Sirdar in 1890. Abbas Hilmi had thought fit to make some very disparaging observations on the appearance and discipline of the troops in a manner which would have left no doubt of deliberate intention, even if there had been no reason to anticipate such an outburst. His action was at once reported to Cromer, with the result that an unpleasant interview was inevitable on his return. The Khedive assumed an attitude of surprise. He had had no idea that Kitchener Pasha had interpreted certain remarks of his in such a serious spirit. The Sirdar had not protested at the time or they would have been at once explained. Unfortunately for His Highness it had been disclosed to the British authorities beforehand from a source which was always friendly, and generally well informed, that this occasion was to be turned to account for a trial of strength, and half Egypt was interestedly aware that the young ruler intended to publicly assert himself. The attempt ended as it only could, by placing him in a humiliating position. He was obliged to issue

<sup>1</sup> Field-Marshal Lord Grenfell.



a general order commending the army and its British officers. Maher Pasha, the Under-Secretary for War, to whose inspiration the incident was due, was dismissed, and Kitchener became Sir Herbert. The Egyptians were much perplexed as to the attitude they should adopt, the more so as Abbas Hilmi had not yet rendered himself unpopular by the autocratic acts of later years. "What shall I do?" said the eminent Sheikh el Bekhry to his friends. "If I go to see Lord Cromer the Khedive will take it amiss. If I go to see the Khedive Lord Cromer will not be pleased. I think I will go to see neither, but wait for a time, and afterwards I will go to see them both."

As I had to be presented to the Khedive, who was now at Alexandria, I accompanied Cromer to Ramleh, the residential suburb of that city, to which the Ministers and many of the diplomatic representatives transferred their activities or passivities in the summer. The weather was hotter than I ever remember it to have been during any of the subsequent years which I spent in lower Egypt. It was reported to have reached 112 in the shade at Cairo and 109 at Alexandria. We endeavoured to distract ourselves by playing piquet in the train. But the midday railway journey and the dust were almost unendurable.

At our interview with the Khedive no further reference was made to the recent incident, to which it was believed he meant to revert on an approaching visit to London. He was quite gracious, but it was easy to perceive that he was ill at ease with

Cromer. The penetrating diagnosis of the man of fifty whom he regarded as a tutor, externally courteous but expressing himself with an incisive directness unwelcome to the Eastern mind, was inevitably destined from the first to arouse the antagonism of a boy of eighteen, as Abbas Hilmi was at the time of his accession, prematurely placed in a position which might readily turn the head of a young man who had not had the advantage of disciplined home-training and tradition. He had been educated at the military school at Vienna, where forms and conventions probably played a much greater part than in corresponding British establishments. Some years at a British public school might have done much for him, but political considerations had made it desirable rather to select neutral ground. Although still boyish in appearance, Abbas was already predisposed to stoutness, and he complained of the heat. He was not without considerable charm of manner when he chose to display it. In all my relations with him, extending over some eight years, his geniality never failed him. A younger man with a less austere manner than that of the British Agent, had no doubt a better chance of enlisting his goodwill. I remember on an occasion when I had to obtain his assent to a reform which was not very acceptable to him, the Khedive observed that he did not particularly appreciate the proposal, but that I had put it to him so courteously that he felt he must at once accept it. An unwelcome obligation may be mitigated by the sense of



merit acquired in making a virtue of a necessity.

I have sometimes wondered whether any better result could have been secured by a more cordial treatment of the young Khedive in this earlier stage. On the whole, having regard to subsequent history and his unscrupulous proceedings towards his own countrymen, I think it is improbable that his arbitrary character would have been modified in any essential respects by gentler handling. But certainly there was a redoubtable element in Cromer, until you came to know him well and had established familiar relations by daily intercourse or common humanistic interests. The English genius for nicknames had christened him "over-Baring." I was hardly ever conscious of such a barrier myself, though I realized how strongly it was felt by others. Even such men as Kitchener and Sir Leslie Rundle admitted to me that they always approached the door of his study with a sense of shyness and misgiving. I remember one day when a reprimand had had to be administered to a certain person, Cromer came into the Chancery and said, "Well, I have settled *him*." But seeing a deprecating look on my face he added, "Oh, I was very kind to him," and he was much amused when the words half-involuntarily escaped me, "Then, God help him!" Many years later, when he was staying with my old friend Pandeli Ralli, he asked him as a great friend of Kitchener's if he knew what the latter's ambitions really were. Ralli said he thought that what K. would really like best would be some day to become his successor



in Egypt. "I do not think," said Cromer, "that that would do at all. K. has not got enough of the *suaviter in modo* which is so necessary in dealing with Egyptians." The story shows how little he was conscious of the feeling which he himself inspired. As a matter of fact, however, Cromer was very gracious in his intercourse with prominent natives of the country.

The Khedive had decided to go to Europe, visiting Austria, France, and England, when the Sultan, his suzerain, intervened. The history of the intrigue which led to the abandonment of his projected voyage is interesting as a revelation of the manner in which Egyptian issues were turned to account by the successors of Bismarck. To us it was really a matter of little moment whether he went to England or not. Indeed, in certain respects it was at that time rather to our advantage that the occasion should be deferred. It was, however, assumed by those who directed the policy of France, whose hostility to Great Britain in Egypt was actively and consistently displayed ever after the abolition of the Anglo-French Control in 1883 until the agreement of 1904, that we attached importance to the visit. Public opinion in that country was greatly excited by the conclusion of the Anglo-Congolese agreement, referred to in the preceding volume as having been signed with the King of the Belgians, and our supposed anxiety to induce the Khedive to go to London would have constituted a sufficient reason for opposing it. At least so it appeared on the surface. On

the other hand, it might also be assumed with justice that statesmen in France were desirous not further to embroil the situation by risking an anti-British demonstration in Paris, which the presence of the Khedive there might readily have provoked. The latter, who was concerned about his own health during the great heat, was genuinely anxious to go to Switzerland, and had realized that it would be difficult for him to be in Europe without paying these formal official visits. The French, in any case, with the Russians in support, set to work at Constantinople, while in Egypt they alarmed the young man by raising the bugbear of a quarrel with his sovereign. The Germans, who had originally encouraged us to go to Egypt, with that amiable way they had of turning round upon their friends when upset by some ephemeral incident—in this case it was the Congo agreement—took this opportunity to ally themselves with the French. The German representative, Baron von Heyking, whose personal antecedents indicated him as a fire-eater, dealt with the situation, as he also did with subsequent incidents, in a rather heavy-handed manner.

The Egyptian Ministers at Ramleh used to appear, during the hours which were not devoted to official duties or siesta, on the long terrace of the Casino, whose corrugated-iron roofing was reminiscent of the sugar-factory for which it had originally been destined in the days of Ismail's unsuccessful and extravagant experiments. There they were no less astonished than we were amused



to see the German Agent and Consul-General ostentatiously proclaiming the new alliance to the public by walking up and down arm-in-arm with his French and Russian colleagues, whom he cordially disliked. Cromer had left the Khedive severely alone to take his own decision, merely observing to Nubar Pasha, who was now Prime Minister, that a change of plans at the eleventh hour would in his opinion be a mistake. As a result of the efforts of the new combination the Khedive received what was tantamount to an order from the Sultan to proceed to Constantinople and to abandon his proposed visits. He could only comply, hoping later on to be allowed to go to Switzerland. His submission, of course, placed him entirely in the Sultan's hands. The French claimed a diplomatic triumph, to which they were welcome. But the agents on the spot were rather disappointed to find that the decision left Cromer quite unconcerned.

In the following winter, when every one was back again in Cairo, there was a recurrence of Heyking incidents, which I could only attribute to some general instruction given him to make the weight of German influence more appreciable to the Egyptians. On one occasion, when he was paying a visit at Shepherd's Hotel, an Egyptian police officer ordered his carriage, which was standing at the door waiting for him, to move on a little way to a more convenient halting-place, as the narrow roadway there was hardly wide enough for the heavy afternoon traffic. The Kavass of



the German agency was well known for his truculent manner, and he was probably responsible for a highly-coloured report of the policeman's action. In any case, we were amazed that evening to receive a letter, evidently written under conditions of great excitement with a spluttering pen, in letters half an inch long straggling over a large folio sheet, in which a protest was entered against this impertinence to the representative of Germany, and penalties were demanded against the injudicious Zaptieh. After this and other outbursts, Heyking invited me one day to come and see him. The instructions from Berlin had perhaps been revised. He told me that he had from various indications received an impression that Cromer did not like him, and he asked me whether there was any reason for this unaccountable prejudice. He had no sense of humour. But personally he was really quite a good fellow, and his distress was so genuine that I endeavoured to bring about more cordial relations. His wife, who was a very charming and cultivated lady, became afterwards well known as the authoress of *Briefe die nicht erreichen*. They did not, however, remain very long with us.

While at Ramleh we paid a visit to Ghazi Moukhtar Pasha, the Turkish High Commissioner, for whom the Egyptian Government had to provide a residence near the sea, in addition to his sumptuous quarters at Cairo. He was originally appointed joint Commissioner with Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff in 1885, and his continued presence in Egypt had no real justification after

the refusal of the Sultan at the eleventh hour to ratify the Drummond-Wolff Convention of 1887, under which we undertook to evacuate Egypt after three years. But apart from other reasons for keeping him there, Abdul Hamid was said to be persuaded that Moukhtar had the evil eye, and he therefore insisted on the maintenance of an honourable sinecure for this fine old soldier at a respectable distance from the Bosphorus. Moukhtar was a sympathetic and dignified example of the old-fashioned immutable Turk, and his military record commanded respect. Had he not been held back by superior orders from Constantinople during the Russo-Turkish War his brilliant campaign in Asia Minor must have ended disastrously for the Russians. I always enjoyed paying him a visit. His French was fairly fluent. But in speaking that language he fell into a Turkish habit of speech and substituted *chose* for any word which he was at a loss to find. On one occasion when I was calling upon him he had wished apparently to say that he had been thinking of my name at the moment when I was announced, and this was how he expressed the coincidence: "O'est très curieux, au moment de votre entrée, votre chose était passée par ma chose."

While searching for a house in which to begin my married life in the autumn, I took over temporarily the rooms of one of the Secretaries who was leaving. Cromer had broken up his establishment. His chef had departed, and most of the efficient Indian retinue of which his household was



composed had gone home. Like every one who serves the State abroad, Cromer found that the demands on his hospitality tended to outrun the means of satisfying them which the salary of the post offered, and he was glad to close down during the summer months. This was advantageous to health as well as to pocket, as the *cuisine* at the Agency was famous and dangerously seductive. He gave careful attention himself to every detail. The purchase of the winter supply of hams in London was a ceremony of importance, and I delighted in the humour of a modest tragedy connected with this annual episode which he related on his return from leave.

In the old-fashioned establishment at which he had dealt for many years he had a long-standing acquaintance with a be-aproned and shirt-sleeved attendant, who assisted him in the selection. But that summer, when he paid his regular visit, he was confronted by an unfamiliar face. Cromer said he would prefer, if possible, to see his old friend Mr. X., who knew from long experience what he required. "I am afraid," said the salesman, "that it will not be possible for Mr. X. to attend you. Mr. X. is in fact dead. And I am sorry to say that he died before completing your Lordship's last order for hams." The solemnity with which this information was imparted suggested how grave a matter it was felt to be that Mr. X. should have had to face eternity with this important duty unfulfilled.

I found Cromer at that time much depressed



about the future in Egypt. The more arduous stages of reconstruction had been surmounted, the race against bankruptcy had been won after some six years of precarious struggle, and it was already possible, as credits became available, to take in hand successive improvements in the internal administration. But there was no visible end in view, no definite solution which he could anticipate, and he could only carry on and gradually develop the great resources of the country under the indeterminate conditions which our policy, or rather absence of policy, entailed. This, Cromer said, had been possible with a friendly Khedive like Tewfik, but might become continually more difficult with a ruler whose hostility was undisguised. Most of the active and articulate elements in Egypt were, for various reasons, hostile, and the opposition of France, supported by Russia, had become chronic whenever her influence could be exerted to counter a British initiative.

While I was at Berlin M. Herbette, the French Ambassador, who had been *directeur politique* at the Quay d'Orsay, was always reverting to the Egyptian question, which constituted, as he said, a permanent difficulty between France and Great Britain. Also, as a great ally of M. de Freycinet, he no doubt felt strongly that in France responsibility was visited on the latter for having allowed us to go to Egypt alone. He said to Malet in February, 1887, when the Drummond-Wolff negotiations regarding Egypt were in progress at Constantinople, that France only sought from us the

moral satisfaction of a definite undertaking to go. She would accept all our reform proposals, and would even agree to a modification of the Capitulations which would subject foreigners to the jurisdiction of the Mixed Courts for criminal offences, if we would fix a definite date for our departure from Egypt. More than that, she would undertake never to go there herself, and would agree to our returning in certain eventualities. And yet it was precisely that last condition which furnished France with a pretext for successfully pressing the Sultan to withhold his final acceptance of the Drummond-Wolff Convention, in support of which Bismarck had, on the other hand, exerted all his influence.

Cromer, who was erroneously believed by many people to have annexationist ambitions, used to apply to himself a parody of the well-known words of Wilkes, "You know I never was a Cromerite." He had not been in the first instance in favour of occupation, the consequences and involvements of which he foresaw. Nor, so far as I am aware, did he raise any objection to the appointment in 1885 of joint Commissioners from Great Britain and Turkey, in virtue of whose report the two Governments were to "consult as to the conclusion of a Convention regulating the withdrawal of the British troops from Egypt in a convenient period." But long before I joined his staff he had realized that things had reached a point at which we could not with credit rapidly terminate the occupation.

It is the more interesting to me to recall these



conversations of 1895, and Cromer's depression over the apparent absence of any definite goal in view, because some five-and-twenty years later I was called upon, in conjunction with Lord Milner, to study the critical situation to which it was inevitably bound to lead at last, and was associated with the latter in submitting to His Majesty's Government the first practical proposal for an equitable solution of the Egyptian problem. In the concluding chapter of that admirable book in which the results of his experience of Egyptian administration are so lucidly and impartially recorded, Cromer poses the question, *Quo vadis?* In seeking for a reply he lays down only two alternative courses as possible, the autonomy of Egypt or its incorporation in the British Empire, and it is the former of these alternatives to which he personally adheres. It is true that writing in 1907, while still favouring the policy of ultimate evacuation, he expressed the opinion that one or more generations would still have to pass away before this solution could be contemplated, though he at the same time did not exclude that intellectual and moral progress might proceed more rapidly during the ensuing than during the past quarter of a century.

We are still far short of the completion of that quarter of a century. But progress towards intellectual and political maturity *vires acquirit eundo*, and certainly when every allowance is made for the inevitable differences between the progress of the East and the West, it has been far more



rapid than I had myself anticipated when I left Egypt in 1901. A number of other factors and precedents have also since manifested themselves which would justify the modification of judgments expressed in 1907. I hope to return some day to the conditions of 1919, and the reasons which led the Special Mission, presided over by Lord Milner, unanimously to adopt the conclusions submitted in their recommendations to the Government. But I venture now to record my belief, based upon eight years of intimate association with Lord Cromer, that he would, having regard to the antecedents and the circumstances which we had to consider in 1920, have endorsed those conclusions and recommendations with all the weight of his great authority.

In subsequent years I generally had to take my leave in the spring and early summer, returning to Cairo just in time to enable Cromer to be away for July, August, and September, so that the opportunity did not often recur of spending a month practically alone with him after his family had left for England. I have, therefore, always looked back with pleasure to those first weeks of close personal intercourse in which I learned to know him well. His life has yet to be written, and therefore, as an estimate of this great man's character can only be formed from other records and the consideration of his public services, I feel it to be a duty to his memory to correct certain misapprehensions which are in danger of finding acceptance.

I have referred briefly in my previous volume

to one of the most brilliant studies in critical biography which have been published in recent years.<sup>1</sup> In the section devoted to General Gordon I was surprised to read, side by side with certain judgments of Cromer which are penetratingly sound, others which appear to me to be wide of the mark. To say that Cromer took no interest in the East, which meant very little to him, save as something to be looked after and a convenient field for the talents of Sir Evelyn Baring, is altogether unfair. It would be as just to say in estimating any other career that whatever the hand had found to do was a convenient field for the activity of its energies. I readily admit that the Oriental mind did not appeal to him, and that in so far as he understood it he regarded it as an obstacle to be overcome rather than as a factor to be studied with sympathetic appreciation. His own mentality was too convincingly logical and western. But just because the opening words of this sentence may approximate to a truth, the conclusion as a whole appears the more unwarranted. It would almost seem as if a desire to enforce artistic values by contrasting the nebulous idealism of Gordon with the sterner realism of Cromer was responsible for a somewhat distorted presentment of the figure in the second plane, described as looking forward to "a pleasant retirement—a country place—some literary recreations." The shade of disparagement implied in these words, and the suggestion that his ambition was to "become an institution," seem to me to

<sup>1</sup> *Eminent Victorians*. Lytton Strachey.



betray a curious misconception of the Cromer that I knew. I do not propose to discuss the vexed question of the mission and the tragic end of General Gordon. The facts are set forth with clean impartiality in Cromer's *Modern Egypt*, which reveals the terrible dilemma confronting the one man who kept his head as an intermediary between a perplexed and vacillating Government which had rejected his advice, and an agent, capable of heroic resolution, whose attitude and counsels however, changed from day to day, and even from hour to hour, under the influence of inspirations which, though inconsistent, he believed to be divine. It is claimed that Sir Evelyn Baring might have resigned when Mr. Gladstone, in the early months of 1884, decided against a relief expedition to Khartoum. His doing so would in no way have modified the issue. In any case the insinuation that in proceeding to London in April, 1884, Baring was, "with a characteristically convenient unobtrusiveness," vanishing from the scene, and therefore shirking the issue, is manifestly unjust. In London, while attending the Financial Conference on Egypt, to which he had been summoned, he would have opportunities for direct discussion, far more effective than representations made by despatch, with those Ministers with whom a decision lay.

Let me therefore here anticipate the experience of eight years of intimate association with him, and place it on record that I could never detect in Cromer any personal motive or any ambition but



that of giving the best of his judgment and energy to the work he had undertaken. He rang as sound as a bell. He was unaffected by popular approval or criticism. He saw with clear perception the values of things as they were, and he dealt with a given situation as it arose fearlessly after mature consideration with practical common sense and great fertility of resource. He made mistakes, as all men must, but no one was readier to acknowledge them than he was himself. He was so essentially a worker that after ill-health had compelled him to retire from Egypt he continually sought new occupation for his energies, and he died working assiduously to the last. I cannot therefore but resent the suggestion that he had looked forward as the end of a great career to the amenities of the Victorian Squirearchy.

There were no doubt certain idiosyncrasies in Cromer which those who understood him and admired him might venture sympathetically to indicate. Circumstances developed the autocratic character to which he was temperamentally pre-disposed. The success which attended his efforts to produce order from chaos, and the eventual elimination of all interference from home, increased his sense of absolute self-dependence, and made an authority which became too exclusively personal tend to diminish the sense of responsibility in those who worked under him. It was curious, when he had adopted a suggestion made to him which proved successful in its effects, in how short a time he convinced himself that the measure was

due to his own initiative. He had, as I have said, always been handicapped by the absence of any definite policy with regard to Egypt, and the obligation to carry on with no avowed goal in view. The objects to be attained during the earlier years of a terminable occupation were purely material. It could not well be otherwise. But it is the exclusively material character of our achievement throughout, to the exclusion of moral development, which might offer ground for criticism. Cromer's positive mind, though it had a humanistic side, was disposed to pass by the things of the soul. Under his régime, with a constantly renewed pressure of obstacles difficult to surmount, administrative conditions which were only designed to be provisional gradually hardened into permanence, with no considered scheme of expansion to meet the changes they were destined to effect. There was, of course, provision for education, but it had been framed only with a view to the formation of a class of minor officials, and remained in a state of arrested development, with the result that in after years it produced a superabundance of competitors for State employment, whose training had indisposed them to return to the agricultural pursuits of their fathers. Cromer's successors took over the situation as they found it, subject to an ever growing spirit of local opposition. It was easier to develop that material prosperity which had become the ideal of the administration by a continuous increase of Western co-operation. Government departments therefore became, after Cromer's retirement,



more and more permeated with British officials. Little serious attempt was made to carry out our professed intention of equipping the Egyptians progressively to manage their own affairs. These were weaknesses in a system which was the result of an indeterminate policy, and of a lack of proper revision after Cromer had accomplished his monumental work. He redeemed the country from bankruptcy, and immensely developed its great natural resources; he established the reign of justice; he raised the fellah from persecuted thralldom to a state of personal freedom and independence, and incidentally he assisted the Egyptian to develop a national consciousness. But the very circumstances which enabled him to accomplish his great work were unfavourable to the creation of progressive machinery suited to the special conditions of an Oriental country. Meanwhile the authorities at home had grown so accustomed to accept his ruling without question that they had ceased to preoccupy themselves with the internal situation of the country, the anomalies of which became more apparent to those familiar with Egypt under Cromer's successors, when the personal influence which had taken the place of a system was removed.

The brief appreciation of my chief, which I have ventured to record as a preface to some personal reminiscences of the many years during which I worked under him in Cairo, would be incomplete without a word of similar testimony to the memory of the first Lady Cromer, to whose unobtrusive



collaboration her illustrious husband owed so much. I shall not trespass into precincts consecrated by a personal relation which commanded the affectionate regard of all their intimates. It is enough to say that a union, long delayed by the difficulties arising from her fidelity to the tradition of an old Catholic family, became an ideal association. I doubt whether it was ever realized how large a share she bore in the work which he accomplished in Egypt. Under her gracious and tactful guidance a social order was established there which set and maintained a high standard in the British community. The desire to merit and retain her esteem was a constant and an active influence. Wherever there was trouble or distress her watchful sympathy was at once revealed, and she had the gift of expressing feeling in sincere and spontaneous terms which went to the heart. A letter in her beautiful writing was always a pleasure to receive in itself, and her correspondence was immense. She had the instinctive perception of the little things men care about. The calm and equable atmosphere which her presence diffused was perfectly adapted to round off certain asperities of Cromer's sometimes preoccupied manner. Having seen so many careers of public men diminished, if not compromised, by the inadequacy or vanity of their wives, I have always looked back upon her beneficent life with growing respect and admiration.

Cromer told me much in those days of his experiences as Controller of the Debt under Ismail, of whose extravagancies the memory was at that

time still vivid in Cairo. A lady was in fact still living there in comfortable domesticity who was reported to have emerged, "noble and nude and antique," from a gigantic pie which formed the centre-piece of the Khedivial supper-table. He said that he could have saved Ismail if the latter had been straight and would have given him his confidence. But Ismail had deceived him, and he then realized that the only possible solution was his removal from Egypt.

The deposed Khedive was a curious compound of many qualities. He had big ideas, and some of them were sound enough in themselves. But he had absolutely no sense of the necessity of subordinating ends to means. His ignorance was profound, and he fell a ready victim to the foreign adventurers who flattered his vanity and plausibly enlisted his patronage for impossible schemes which transferred the wealth of Egypt to their own pockets. An assimilation of Western methods did not modify the despotic instincts of an Eastern ruler who allowed nothing to impede the gratification of his whims and who, though not essentially cruel, was callous to the sufferings of his people and indifferent to the processes by which the last shilling might be squeezed out of them to pay the interest on his debts.

He had humour of a kind, which he exercised with a certain contemptuous geniality at the expense of the individuals who robbed him right and left. In those days the consuls, commercial consuls for the most part, used to add to their incomes



by pressing him to give orders in Europe, on which they obtained commissions. To one of these gentlemen, who had been granted an audience and who stood before him hat in hand, he observed: "Put on your hat, please, my friend, this palace is full of draughts; you might catch a cold here and then I should have to pay an indemnity."

On another occasion a gentleman who wanted financial assistance was received in the evening in one of the vast rooms at Abdin. None of the innumerable chandeliers were lit, and there were only three candles burning on a small table. After greeting his guest Ismail glanced at the three lights. "Pardon me, my friend," he said, "I am very hard up just now. One candle will be sufficient for us." And he blew out the other two. It was evidently unnecessary for him with this visitor to follow the practice which he frequently adopted of attracting his interlocutor towards a window and there detaining him while peering intently into his face. A friend of mine who had noticed that he made a habit of engaging in conversations near the window asked him whether this was deliberate, and if he had any particular reason for doing so. Ismail replied that he had found from long experience that if he could bring a man's face into a strong light, he could always discover whether or not he was telling the truth.

He used to contemplate with satisfaction the Kasr-el-Nil bridge which he had caused to be built at enormous expense. More than once he was



heard to remark : " People say I was a fool to spend so much money on this bridge. Well, I may possibly have been a fool to build it at all, but I most certainly was a fool not to spend more and make it twice as broad."

One amusing story of Cromer's about him has a delightful Eastern savour. Ismail was suffering from a severe toothache, and sent for a European dentist, who after examining conditions decided that the offending tooth must be extracted. " Yes," said Ismail, " no doubt, but that will hurt me." " Not at all," replied the expert, " I shall give Your Highness gas, and you will not feel anything." He explained the mode of procedure, whereupon Ismail, looking somewhat incredulous, told his A.D.C. to bring up one of the sentries from the Palace gate. " Now," said he to the odontologist, " give *him* gas!" The gas was administered. " Pull out one of his teeth!" The tooth was extracted. " Give him some more gas," said Ismail, " and pull out another." The victim admitted that he had felt nothing during the operation. But the Khedive, reflecting that a *fellah* soldier might not be very sensitive, still hesitated, and he sent for an unfortunate woman from the harem, on whom the operation was repeated. Then having satisfied himself that the extraction would be practically painless, he submitted his august person to the practitioner, and was very well satisfied with the result. It is to be hoped that the soldier was liberally rewarded for his part in the experiment. The dentist in any case received a

handsome sum in Treasury Bonds, which, the story concludes, were not honoured.

It was, I think, Ismail who claimed that Egypt had ceased to be in Africa and had become a part of Europe. But he himself remained irredeemably Oriental in methods and mentality. The story of Ismail Bey Sadyk, the Mufettish, has already found its way into print. He had been the Khedive's confidant in all his business transactions, and in the brief period during which he acted as Finance Minister was reported to have accumulated £800,000. His wealth and his opportunities had made him the most powerful man in the country. But he knew too much, and Goschen, who had been entrusted with a mission to investigate the financial conditions, had most inconsiderately demanded the production of his books and papers. One afternoon in the year 1877 he was honoured by an invitation to drive with the Khedive. At the Palace of Ghezireh, on the island linked to Cairo by the bridge which Ismail regretted not to have widened, the carriage stopped and they descended. The Mufettish was offered coffee, but thought it more prudent to decline it. Then there was a tap on his shoulder and he was hastily conveyed on board a steamer which lay moored to the Palace quay. The ropes were at once cast off, and the vessel left for Upper Egypt. Goschen waited in vain for the books which Ismail Sadyk was reported most unfortunately to have taken with him. He was known to be of a full habit, and an ample supply of strong liquors was placed at his



disposal to console him in his enforced exile. The climate of Upper Egypt does not pardon indulgence in alcohol. After a considerable interval a little party bearing the Khedive's signet ring was sent up to visit the steamer. They returned and reported that the Mufettish had died of drink, and an answer in those terms was given to a question in the British House of Commons enquiring as to the cause of his death.

Even a residence of some years in Europe, at Naples, after his deposition, did not modify Ismail's essentially Oriental mentality. In the late 'eighties he came to London in order to press personally certain claims which he had formulated against the British Government. Most of these claims were manifestly absurd, while for a limited number a plausible case might be advanced. He had collected several foreign legal opinions of questionable value in support of them, and he was also anxious to obtain favourable counsel's opinion in England with which to impress the Foreign Office. A friend of mine in London, whom he used sometimes to consult on questions of business, strongly advised him to drop all the claims which could not be seriously substantiated, and which if maintained would only serve to discredit the more plausible ones and entail their collective rejection. But Ismail took the view congenial to the eastern mind that the greater the number of claims put forward the better would be his prospect of obtaining satisfaction for some of them. He assumed, rightly or wrongly, that Lord Randolph Churchill intended to use all his influence



against their favourable consideration, and made enquiries in various quarters as to that Minister's financial position, which he believed to be weak. Then he paid a nocturnal visit to the friend in question, who had already retired to bed. Having aroused the butler he obtained admission, and insisted that the business was so urgent that his employer must at once get up and see him. Ismail was accompanied by an Italian secretary. He had in his hand a black bag, which, he said, contained a thousand sovereigns. He invited my friend to act as his intermediary and to convey this sum on the following morning to Lord Randolph Churchill in order to buy off his supposed opposition. He became indignant when this proposal was received with hilarity and was explained to be quite out of the question. There was, he said, no reason for laughter. He had been Khedive of Egypt for twenty years, and in all that time he had never known anyone refuse "Baksheesh." On being pressed to give an instance of any acceptance of such inducement by British officials in Egypt, he could only allege that he had once given a pair of Arab horses to the wife of such an official. But when asked whether this present had led to his securing the desired object he replied: "No. That was just the worst of it." The story of this midnight interview was eventually brought to the knowledge of Lord Randolph Churchill, who was greatly amused.

No doubt many illegalities were still perpetrated in Egypt for many years after the occupation. In

spite of the theoretic application of impartial justice to all classes, members of the Khedivial family still regarded themselves as outside and above the law. Cromer had received a visit, some time before I joined his staff, from the wife of a British resident who devoted a well-intentioned but very insistent activity to social questions. She arrived on this occasion full of indignation to inform him that she had knowledge of a white slave in the Harem of Princess — who was being gravely ill-treated. Cromer only insisted on an assurance that she was positive as to the correctness of her facts, and having obtained it he went to see the Khedive—it was still Tewfik—and demanded his intervention. Tewfik enquired what would satisfy him, and he replied that the woman must be sent to his house the same afternoon. She arrived late in the evening, accompanied by another woman, in a carriage, with the inevitable male duenna on the box. It so happened that the Cromers were that evening giving a fancy-dress ball, and the British Agent was expected, sorely against his own inclinations, to appear as an historic character. To those who knew him the grim humour of what was really a tragic situation will appear. The woman protested with tears that she could not understand why she had been brought there, she had nothing to complain of, and only begged to be allowed to return. But the issue could not then be avoided. The lady who had brought the charge was sent for and provided with an interpreter. In taking her to the room where the victim was waiting Cromer



said: "Now, go in and do what I could not do. Strip her and see if there are any marks of ill-usage." By this time guests were beginning to arrive in the costumes of all the ages. In due course the lady reappeared and apologized most humbly for all the trouble which she had given. She was now convinced that she had been entirely mistaken. "What have you done with the woman?" Cromer asked. "I have sent her back to her mistress, as she wished." "Did you strip her as I told you to do?" No, she had not thought it necessary. "Then," said Cromer, "you made a great mistake. You have forced me to take a very extreme measure, and all to no purpose." Some little time after this interview it seems that the woman in question disappeared. At least such was the information which reached the lady who had brought the charge, and she admitted with tears in her eyes that she felt responsible for her death.

At the end of June Cromer left for England. There were at the moment no menacing storm-clouds on the horizon. But minor problems arose daily for the solution of which precedent was seldom available. Cromer had all the threads in his hands; his methods were largely personal, and there was little to be gleaned from the consultation of records. Unfortunately also for me Boyle, the Oriental secretary who kept the pro-consul's conscience, had decided to take leave this year, so that I was deprived of his valuable experience. As my old friend Harry Boyle is still happily alive I can only,



without offending his modesty, refer with a certain reserve to his remarkable gifts, his unfailing humour and inexhaustible good nature. He was a product of the British dragomans school at Constantinople, which trained a series of eminent officials for the public service, and has since many years been closed. The Turkish language with its exuberance of courtesies was congenial to him, and his knowledge of Arabic was profound. An impeccable memory and an extensive and peculiar range of study in every branch of literature made him the most entertaining and remunerative of companions. He is one of the most delightful of correspondents. His letters, which kept me posted in Egyptian affairs after my departure from Cairo, and which I have not as he begged consigned to "devouring Hephraustus at the back of the kitchen grate," remain a delightful and refreshing record, but they are not for publication. That he should have been born in Central America, apparently during an orchid-collecting pilgrimage of a botanical father, and that while domiciled at Ambleside he should be the owner of a vineyard in Sicily, and the tenant of a porter's lodge attached to the house of a Cairene notable, were accidents which did not seem inappropriate to his unusual and endearing individuality.

Sir Elwin Palmer, whose earlier career had been in India, had succeeded Sir Edgar Vincent as Financial Adviser. He remained some weeks longer in Egypt and reported the current proceedings of the Council of Ministers at which his office entitled

him to assist. Jack Gorst (Sir Eldon Gorst), who after many years service at the Agency had been lent to the Egyptian Administration as Financial Under-secretary, was before long to be transferred to the Interior as Adviser, a newly created function. My old Balliol friend Clinton Dawkins, who had been for some years in charge of the interests of the Peruvian Corporation, was then to take over his post in the Finance Department, of which Lord Milner had been the first British incumbent.

The Prime Minister with whom I had now to deal was the famous veteran Nubar Pasha, who had replaced Riaz Pasha in the preceding January. He had filled the same office from the beginning of 1884 until June, 1888, when his opposition to the appointment of civilian Advisers and to British intervention in internal affairs had led to a rupture with Cromer, during which Nubar learned the lesson that there was nothing to gain by complaining to H.M.'s Government of the policy of their Agent. His views had, however, since then undergone considerable modification. He had always accepted the British military occupation as necessary, and even desirable, and he now fully acquiesced in the existing order. In reality Nubar was himself by origin almost as foreign to Egypt as the British Advisers.

The tall handsome grey-haired Armenian, who claimed with pride that he had given effect to the supremacy of the law in Egypt, possessed the magic gift of charm. An exceptional command of language, equally remarkable when French was his instrument



of expression, and a facility for formulating brilliant generalisations with a plausibility which tempted the listener to forgo examination of the premises, often effectually disguised a tendency to intrigue, developed by the associations and conditions of his early life. If he had no exceptional administrative capacity he was on quite a different plane intellectually from that of the average Egyptian or Turco-Egyptian of the dominant class at that time. Externally he appeared to radiate benevolence, and as it was impossible not to like him and feel his personality, so it was difficult for a younger man not to be subjugated by his genial manner and the unhesitating flow of his rounded periods.

I could well understand how his ready gift of speech had once availed to save his life at a critical moment from the caprice of a despotic master. He told me the tale himself. Nubar, who had made himself useful to Mohamed Ali, was in his younger days travelling in the suite of the famous Ibrahim Pasha from Constantinople to Alexandria. He had managed in some way to offend that fire-eating soldier, who ordered the Armenian to be thrown overboard. Nubar perceived that the sun was already low in the sky and, knowing that it is contrary to Moslem law to carry out a death sentence after sunset, he craved and obtained permission to speak before meeting his end. After a few preliminary words he introduced a story which he unfolded with so much eloquence and skill that Ibrahim became an absorbed listener. The interest



of his hearer did not fail until the sun touched and then sank below the horizon. Thus he obtained grace until the following morning, by which time Ibrahim had forgotten the cause of offence and received him back into favour.

His son-in-law Tigrane Pasha, who was much more of a cosmopolitan, had also a considerable attraction of charm. But Cromer had found it impossible to work with him, and he was no longer Minister for Foreign Affairs. His place had been taken by the first Copt who obtained high office, Boutros Pasha Ghali, whose energy and intelligence eventually brought him to the Premiership, only to be assassinated by a Moslem fanatic. He died sincerely regretted by many friends, some of whom like myself when no longer in Egypt maintained cordial relations with him until his regretted end.

Not long after Cromer's departure I had to deal with a very troublesome affair. A Turco-Egyptian occupying a high social position was charged by the Slavery Suppression Department with the recent introduction of a slave into the country. Such cases were very rare, and the Department was in fact soon afterwards abolished, there being no adequate justification for its maintenance. When they did occur they had to be dealt with under existing rules by court martial, and therefore fell into the province of the Sirdar. It would be of little interest to recapitulate the inner history of the issue which was eventually terminated by the defendant being declared physically unfit to undergo

trial, after an examination carried out by two British medical officers attached to the Egyptian Army. This was probably the best manner in which to solve what may not have been a very good case. But the manner in which it was accomplished afforded me my first opportunity of gauging the curious secretive character of Kitchener, whom I afterwards learnt to appreciate through many years of intimate association which matured into a friendship maintained until his tragic death.

I had first heard his name in 1886, when I was in Berlin. He had been sent out to Zanzibar, in the days of Sir John Kirk, as a special commissioner to investigate the rights of Sultan Barghash on the mainland, and the situation arising out of the territorial claims advanced by Germany. Bismarck was dissatisfied with the attitude of Colonel Kitchener, complaining that he always sided with the French Commissioner against the German. Herbert Bismarck went much farther and claimed to have made the astounding discovery that he was the son of one Küchner, a native-born German renegade, who had fought against his own country in 1870, while Kitchener himself had also served in the French army.<sup>1</sup> There was some justification for the latter allegation, as he had for a brief while, before actually receiving his commission in the Engineers, joined the army of the Loire under General Chanzy. An

<sup>1</sup> The Kitcheners were an old-established family in Suffolk for some two centuries before Horatio Herbert was born. His father, Colonel Kitchener, who served in the 13th Dragoons and 9th Foot, had purchased an estate in Ireland in 1850.



attack of pneumonia contracted in a ballooning experience cut short his career as a French officer. The official reprimand which he received from the Duke of Cambridge on his return to England was discounted by the old soldier's evident sympathy. The memory of K.'s services in France's day of need became a tradition which was revived with enthusiasm in the grim autumn of 1914. I heard, not without emotion, that after the disaster to the *Hampshire*, the curé of Dinan, where the family had been living during the Franco-Prussian War when he started to join General Chanzy, performed a solemn mass in the church for the repose of the soul of the old friend of France.

Kitchener, when appointed Sirdar of the Egyptian Army in 1890, had at last emerged after a career which until then had hardly fulfilled his undoubted ambition. The captain of Engineers, who had acted as a military vice-consul in Asia Minor and subsequently had directed the work of the Exploration Fund in Palestine, had been among the first British officers selected to shape anew the Egyptian Army under Sir Evelyn Wood, and in that service had quickly made his mark. It was while stationed in Cyprus that he came over to Cairo, I believe without leave, to offer his services, and he was able to advance the plea that he knew a certain amount of Arabic. It was to my future brother-in-law, then Captain Stuart Wortley, who was A.D.C. to Sir Evelyn Wood, that he made his application. He was first attached to the Egyptian cavalry.

When I arrived in Egypt Kitchener was as yet



by no means firmly in the saddle or sure of himself. Some spirit of misgiving or mistrust prevented him from putting his cards on the table. While the ends which he had in view were sound in themselves, he had a habit of approaching them by tortuous ways and sometimes, as it seemed to me, made an unnecessarily misleading movement in order to gain a point which he might equally well have reached by the direct road. He was extraordinarily reserved, the very opposite of the bluff honest soldier of whom the general public in later years regarded him as the type. It was characteristic of him that he early managed to emancipate the estimates of the Ministry of War to a considerable extent from financial control, and made the most of an Egyptian provision for departmental *virements*, by which the sums credited under one head could be transferred to another. I have little doubt that from the moment he took charge of the Egyptian Army he contemplated the eventual reconquest of the Soudan, and laid his plans with a prescient grasp of the future. But as yet he kept his own council. After success had crowned his career, when he was in a strong position to state his case and carry it, his methods changed to some extent. But the old habit of secretiveness remained. In these early days a perceptible absence of frankness and an assumption that if the end was acceptable the means of attaining it were his own affair made him officially something of a problem. It would almost seem as though his mentality had been affected by long communion with men

whose minds worked on Oriental lines, and when he put forward a demand we used involuntarily to ask ourselves. "What is he really out for?"

Kitchener undoubtedly had vision, and there was a certain inarticulate poetry in his nature. His face not less than his manner suggested the contemplative spirit. Those curious very blue eyes of his seemed to look beyond you to the desert horizons where so much of his life had been spent. His intuition rather than his reason saw beyond the actual moment, and then he elaborated far-reaching plans for execution when the time should be ripe. Having once determined on a course he was un-receptive to new ideas, and worked towards his end with machine-like precision. Intellectually the past attracted him. Exploration work in Palestine had stirred his imagination. He told me more than once that his own predilection would have been to retire early from active life and devote the remainder of his years to archæological investigation. He was a very hard worker, and he mercilessly exacted the maximum of effort from his subordinates. He seldom bestowed praise, or even approval. And yet men worked for him as for no other. He appeared ill-at-ease in social life, and rather shy in the society of women, though it is an error to suppose that he was never susceptible to their attraction. There was certainly one who exercised a strong influence for good over his idealism. He had in those days no intimate friends. Many admired him. Very few really liked him. He walked by himself.



Egypt made Kitchener, and he could never dissociate himself from its spell. He realized a long cherished dream when he returned there as Agent and Consul-General in succession to Sir Eldon Gorst in 1911. I like to think of him in those afterdays as associated with certain beneficent activities which were not conceived in a solely material spirit. It was to his initiative that the institution of dispensaries and maternity homes throughout the country districts was due. The details of the scheme were worked out at his request by Lady Sybil Graham, whose husband, our present Ambassador in Rome, was then Adviser to the Interior. They have been of unspeakable benefit to the fellaheen, who have greatly appreciated them.

The memory of K. is also associated with the provision of safe refuges for the roosting and breeding of the egret. These beautiful birds, which in my time were to be seen in large numbers all over the delta, had been almost exterminated by the alien plumage hunter. The egret, which eats the boll-worm, is the protector of the cotton crop, and the fellah has now been taught to understand the value of its beneficent presence. Thanks to Kitchener's sanctuaries the birds have once more become numerous and are again a characteristic feature in the Egyptian landscape. It is a constant pleasure when the sun is setting to see them flighting low over the water, and rising in a cloud over the city bridges on their silent passage down the river from the fields to their familiar trees in the Zoological Garden at Ghizeh. When I returned



to Egypt in 1920 the homeward flight of the egrets always brought back a kindly thought of K., and a picture of the strong ruddy face with the light-blue eyes watching their white companies winging through the golden evening glow.

The genial and popular head of the Intelligence Service, Colonel Wingate, presented a marked contrast to Kitchener. He combined the practical with the intellectual to a remarkable degree. Long experience and a certain *flair* had taught him unerringly to penetrate the subtleties of the Arab mind, a gift which at first sight seemed inconsistent with, though perhaps it was really not a little due to his own directness of character and rigid rectitude. Wingate did not by any means always see eye to eye with Kitchener, but they were both indispensable for a time which was rapidly approaching and necessary to one another as complement and supplement. It will be more opportune to speak later on of Wingate's great services to the Empire, services which I feel have not been fully appreciated at the close of a career of which both he and those who hold him in high regard have reason to be proud.

The Egyptian military service, and its technical branches in particular, had attracted the élite of the British Army. Our officers, mostly quite young men, were on excellent terms with their Egyptian colleagues, and the seniors among them, such as my old friends Sir Leslie Rundle, then Adjutant-General of the Army, and Sir John Maxwell, were eminently possessed of those genial and human

qualities which are so valuable for bridging over the great gulf between the East and West. The latter, in spite of his having occupied a position in Egypt during the Great War which often demanded the exercise of stern authority, has nevertheless always retained the regard and affection of the Egyptian people.

British inspectors under the Ministry of the Interior had hardly then fully established their position in the country districts, and our influence still made itself chiefly felt there through the Irrigation Officers. Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff had left a splendid tradition behind him, which was carried on by Forster, Garstin, and Wilcocks. Moncrieff had impressed it on his staff that they were there as the friends of Egypt only to guide and advise. But so much was their guidance and advice appreciated that they were revered almost to the point of worship by the fellaheen, who for the first time in their experience were aware of an impersonal and impartial influence, securing equality of treatment for all irrespective of position.

The appointment of British Inspectors of the Interior, though I saw no reason to criticize it at the time, when I was quite new to the country, marked a fresh departure and an extension of our intervention and authority. No doubt the admirable work of a man like Carter-Wilson, who lived among the people, riding from village to village, and listening to their grievances, was of very great benefit to the peasants, by whom in those relatively early days the presence of the inspectors



was greatly appreciated. But the system once initiated involved further development and the obligation to impose a more efficient provincial administration which, however desirable in itself, had not been one of the aims originally contemplated by the occupation. As time went on it inevitably tended to diminish the consideration of the provincial governors and the district officials, and entailed the assumption of increasing responsibilities by the occupying Power.

Less known perhaps in the country districts, but no less highly esteemed in the capital, was the judicial adviser, Sir John Scott, whose counsels, invariably sound, were advanced with a tact and discretion which secured for them immediate acceptance.

My first summer in charge in Egypt was not without its problems, but none of them proved insurmountable. I remained in Cairo, where life was very endurable in spite of the heat. The Fencing Club in the Esbakieh Gardens was a great resource, and every evening after tea time I there met Maxwell, then a colonel in the Egyptian Army, though only a captain of the Black Watch, and we played with the foils and the épée under the instruction of Maître Salon, a severe disciplinarian of craft and warm-hearted exponent of the noble art of swordsmanship. Salon, who was the friend of every one, successfully kept up the appearance of being quite unaware that there were such things as international animosities or political issues in the turbulent world of Cairo. The Fencing Club was



indeed a happy point of contact with the French colony, and in its genial atmosphere harmony always prevailed.

In June of this year was published Gerry Portal's unfinished book, with the journals which I had edited and supplemented, under the title of *The British Mission to Uganda in 1893*.<sup>1</sup> Cromer had written an introduction, and I supplied a memoir. The tragic story of the two Portals occupied a great deal of public attention, and in the lengthy reviews I was glad to see that due credit was given not only to Gerry's capacity as a leader, but also to the considerable literary gift which the examiners who rejected him for matriculation at Oxford had apparently failed to detect. It should remain a standard work for the early history of the East African Colony.

An enthusiastic letter from Nubar Pasha, in which he gave high praise to the brief epilogue which I had added, pleased me not a little, and also interested me as an indication of character, for he appeared to be deeply stirred by words intended to do honour to a conception of life inevitably so different from that with which circumstance had made him familiar.

Cromer returned at the beginning of October, whereupon being released from duty I raced home to be married. It must have been during the brief interval preceding that ceremony, or else just before I had gone out to Egypt, that I first met Rudyard Kipling, who had returned from England and had

<sup>1</sup> Edward Arnold, 1894.

taken the world by storm with his *Soldiers Three*, his *Plain Tales from the Hills*, and his early volumes of verse. Some years before we met I had heard of his work from Mowbray Morris, who as editor of *Macmillan's Magazine* had been one of the first to recognize it. It was at a little dinner in Bruton Street given by Lord and Lady Granby (Duke and Duchess of Rutland), at which there were present besides myself, A. J. Balfour, George Curzon, and Harry Cust, with one or two more. In such company the conversation did not flag, but the guest of the evening was rather contemplative, as indeed he might well be at the side of the gifted hostess, whose beauty was unsurpassed by any contemporary of my generation.

Our wedding took place, not as I could have wished quietly in the country, but in St. Peter's, Eaton Square, with a certain pomp and circumstance. My old Balliol friend the Rev. B. W. Randolph, the only one of my intimates who had entered the church, came up from Ely to marry us. And so from the 27th of October a new life began. A lack of reticence, even in regard to domestic relations, in biographical records does not appeal to me. It is enough to say here that from thenceforth every activity and accomplishment of subsequent experience was stimulated by the double energy of a perfect association, and that although a silver wedding has long since followed that memorable date, every succeeding year has only added to the measure of my debt.



## CHAPTER II

1895-96

Venice. Malta. Stuart-Wortley and the reconstruction of the Egyptian Army. The Agency at Cairo. Daily routine under Cromer. Social figures—Egyptian, Cosmopolitan, and British. Wilfrid Blunt. The escape of Slatin from Omdurman. Cruise in Greek islands. Sir William Butler. Italian defeat in Abyssinia. Proposals to create a diversion. Preparations for the advance to Dongola.

Our road to Egypt lay through Italy, and part of a delightful honeymoon was spent in Venice, where the upper floor of the hospitable Palazzo Barbaro had been prepared for us by the kindest of hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Curtis, at the instance of their son Ralph, a very old friend of mine who had been one of the frequenters of Whistler's studio in the merry days of Tite Street. He had himself considerable ability as a painter, and would have achieved much more than he did if circumstances had not made life too easy for him. Our host was a very gallant old American gentleman, who had suffered for his chivalry. He had knocked down a policeman who had been insolent to his wife, and endured the inevitable consequences. He then shook off the dust of his native land and settled in Venice, where the Palazzo Barbaro became famous



for its genial hospitality. Curtis had a pleasant humour of his own. "You know Vanderbilt, of course?" said a visitor to him one day. "No," he said, "when I left America he was only vander-building." Like Sam Ward he could quote Horace appositely, as he showed in the case of two billiard players engaged in a game of fifty who had maintained level scores and reached forty-nine all, when one of them missed his cue and gave away the winning point. "Tulit punctum qui miscuit," was the appropriate comment. Curtis had many stories to tell about Robert Browning, whose son became their neighbour at the Palazzo Rezzonico. Commentators will some day no doubt expend much ingenuity in endeavouring to explain the genesis of "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came." But Daniel Curtis had not hesitated to ask the author himself for a clue. Browning very frankly said that when he wrote it he did not mean anything in particular. It was just a lyric. He had once made a resolution, to which however he did not adhere, to write a lyric of some kind every day, and "Childe Roland" was the first of that contemplated series. Venice, which I had first seen as a child when the white-coated Austrian military band played in the piazza of St. Mark, was at this time the centre of a small and pleasant Anglo-American society, the members of which did not, as so many foreign communities do, quarrel amongst themselves. Lady Layard, the Edens, the Bronsons, and the Curtises were its mainstays, with Horatio Browne and Madam Viel (Alethea Lawley) to repre-

sent letters and research, and the native Venetians, whose susceptibilities they did not outrage, made them welcome. The Lido had not then begun to attract the all-day bridge player and the social mannequin. The great Campanile of St. Mark's had not yet subsided.

By Florence, Siena, Rome, and Naples, we made our way down to Messina, and thence to Malta, which I then saw for the first time. My brother and sister-in-law were living at Casa Leone, a mile or so outside Valetta. Major Stuart-Wortley<sup>1</sup> was brigade major on the staff. He had been intimately connected with the early history of the British occupation of Egypt, having been the first active British officer to enter the Egyptian service, after 1882, as military secretary to Colonel Valentine Baker. When the activities of the latter were limited under instructions from home to the control of the gendarmerie, Sir Evelyn Wood came out as the first British Sirdar, and Stuart-Wortley became his A.D.C. Almost simultaneously the services were enlisted of a subaltern of artillery whom little more than ten years later I met as Adjutant-General of the Egyptian Army, General Sir Leslie Rundle.

After a sufficient nucleus of promising young officers had been enrolled the inevitable dinner was given to celebrate the reconstruction of the Egyptian Army. My old chief Lord Dufferin, who had come from the Embassy at Constantinople as High Commissioner to study and recommend constitutional reforms, made the speech of the evening.

<sup>1</sup> Lt.-Gen. the Hon. E. Stuart-Wortley.



His greatest hit was quite unconscious. Describing in his roundest periods the important field of activity which lay before these officers he affirmed, sweeping his right hand rhetorically towards a diminutive but highly intellectual young sapper, that they were not to be "the brutal and licentious soldiery of a despotic Power, but," indicating with his left a certain flamboyant major of gendarmerie, whose subsequent career was brief and hectic, "the mild and unassuming guardians of the public peace."

Early recruits, only a little junior to these, were, besides Kitchener and Wingate, Sir John Maxwell and the well-known Bimbash Stewart, who after serving as a subaltern in the first Nile expedition returned home to reappear immediately as a major in the Egyptian Army. The late Sir William Butler, who, after the withdrawal from Dongola, had been sent as brigadier to command at Wady-Halfa, seeing him there congratulated him on his high military rank. "Yes, sir," said Bimbash, "we have both of us come back here much bigger bugs than we expected to. Haven't we?" Nature had designed him to be a soldier of fortune in more adventurous and less censorious days when his high spirits and genial insolence would have kept his sword's point busy. Many years later, when he had become a messenger and had carried the King's mail to Homburg, he there met a very charming American lady of whom he only knew that she was residing in a foreign capital where, as he learned soon afterwards, her husband was the Ambassador. Some rather too enterprising questions regarding



social life in that capital led her to observe: "I do not think, Major Stewart, that you quite realize what my position is at——." "No," he replied, "I do not, but if it's anything like my position in London, it's rocky—damned rocky."

My acquaintance with Stuart-Wortley was long anterior to the kinship established by marriage, and he had paid several visits to Malet while I was at the Berlin Embassy. He had played an important part in the first Nile expedition in command of Arab irregulars, and had accompanied the steamers in the forlorn hope to reach Khartoum in time to save Gordon. I have always regretted that he has not availed himself of a facile pen to compile a record of those stirring times in Egypt and the Soudan. Lest he should never do so I would rescue from oblivion here one story which he told me.

It will be remembered by those who have studied the sequence of events at Khartoum up to the death of Gordon that Colonel Stewart, with Mr. Power, who had been acting as *Times* correspondent, and M. Herbin, the French Consul, left that tragic station on the 10th of September, 1884, in the steamer *Abbas* to return to Egypt, and that they were all three treacherously murdered after landing at Abou Hamed, between Berber and Merowi. Subsequently during the Nile campaign some leaves of the Consul's diary were found in the house where they were killed. Wortley, who was there, read them and made notes of their contents. He believed that the papers found were eventually sent to Lord

Wolseley. On one of these pages of his diary M. Herbin had recorded his regard and admiration for Gordon. He confessed that he bitterly regretted what he had done against him at Khartoum. But he had been compelled to choose between his own inclinations and his duty, which was to carry out his instructions. What were those instructions? They were no doubt consistent with the general "policy of pinpricks" then in favour, which aimed at making difficulties for the representatives of Great Britain. The action taken cannot, however, have had much influence on subsequent events in the Soudan, and the French agent, of whom Gordon speaks with appreciation in his diaries, paid the penalty with the others for having remained too long at his post.

When we reached Cairo I found that there had been a most welcome addition to our staff in Arthur Stanley,<sup>1</sup> who had but recently recovered from a long and painful illness, with a permanent stiffening of the knee joints, induced by rheumatic fever. His disability bore hardly on one with so active a temperament. But he accepted it with exemplary patience and courage, and never allowed it to depress his splendid spirits or embitter the essential kindness of his genial humour. The remaining members of our staff at this time were Alfred Mitchell-Innes, who has retired from the public service, Horace Rumbold, actually Ambassador at Constantinople, and Count de Salis, who had joined a few months after myself, with his beautiful and charming wife.

<sup>1</sup> The Hon. Sir Arthur Stanley, G.B.E.



A Franco-Belgian by birth, with sisters married in Austria and Italy, she brought a gracious sense of something delicate and exotic into our British atmosphere, and as her bright life closed prematurely I have always hoped she realized how much we all loved her.

Nubar Pasha had been compelled by his health to resign in the autumn, and he was succeeded by Mustapha Pasha Fehmy, who with Boutros to support him as Minister for Foreign Affairs remained in office during the remainder of my eight years in Egypt. He loyally co-operated with those who had, as he realized, the best interests of his country at heart. He was incapable of intrigue, courteous, upright and honest, and it was a pleasure to work with a great gentleman whom I also felt to be a personal friend.

I do not propose to write a history of British effort and accomplishment in Egypt. This has been done with authority in Cromer's admirable summary. I shall confine myself, as I have in a preceding volume, to episodes and incidents of personal experience, believing that these may also serve a useful purpose in throwing light on tendencies and controversies. Although life in Egypt was never altogether without incident, the first two years of my residence there were perhaps the least eventful. There was never lack of work, as the indeterminate character of the occupation and the opposition which its continuance aroused in certain countries rendered constant vigilance indispensable. The only definite sanction for our intervention was



derived from what may be called the Granville doctrine, which had laid down that so long as the occupation lasted the advice of Her Majesty's Government, conveyed through their representative in Egypt, would have to be followed. A finger had therefore to be kept on the pulse of every Department and contact continually maintained with the administrative officials. I had in addition work of my own to do, in preparing financial and economic reports.

The social side of life was also rather exacting. Egypt was already a favourite winter resort, to which sooner or later most of our acquaintances seemed to gravitate. Besides these winter visitors the social circle included the Diplomatic body, the Commissioners of the Debt, the judges of the Mixed Tribunals and a few leading advocates, the limited number of Egyptians who forgathered cordially with the foreign elements, the British officials in the administration and the officers of the army of occupation.

The Cromers were extremely hospitable. While the first Lady Cromer was the most charming of hostesses, he endured rather than enjoyed his obligations to the visitors for whom the great proconsul was one of the *mirabilia* of their winter experience. While he was rigid about punctuality, having generally more work on his hands than time in which to get through it, and was not indifferent to the sensibilities of his excellent *chef*, there is no truth in the story that he used to stand watch in hand at the door and look significantly at it

before shaking hands with guests who were not up to time. We used to chaff him about the recurrence in his conversation with visitors of the question whether they were going up the Nile and his evident anxiety that they should answer in the affirmative. The other inevitable *cliché* question was, "Have you been to see the Pyramids?" The unusual answer of one lady gave him particular pleasure. "Yes, I have," she said, "and I never saw anything so ridiculous in my life."

To young people he was particularly kind, and he took a personal interest in the balls which he provided for their entertainment. But at musical parties he was quite out of his element. I remember a terrible disaster which occurred somewhat later at the Agency. The Austro-Hungarian Commissioner of the Debt, Count Zaluski, was a remarkable musician, and he especially prided himself on his interpretation of Chopin. He could seldom be induced to play to others, and when he did the performance partook of an almost ritual character. He had, however, consented to play Chopin to Lady Cromer and a small party of friends. Cromer had been duly and seriously warned that he must not speak a word to anyone so long as the Count was at the piano. What happened is best described in his own language. "I had had my instructions," he said, "and of course I meant to behave myself without reproach. Zaluski sat down to the piano, which he carefully dusted with a silk handkerchief. He had just run his fingers over a few bars, when I saw my American colleague



bearing down upon me, and I knew that all was lost. 'Well,' he began, 'we've got into our house, and Mrs. Harrison is far from satisfied with the sink and sanitary arrangements.' I had not said a word, but Zaluski stopped dead, swung round on his music-stool and surveyed me with a look which would have paralysed an army of Philistines."

The representative in question, my friend Colonel Harrison, who belonged to the well-known Philadelphia family, only arrived in my second year in Egypt, in succession to Mr. Penfield, who returned to Europe as American Ambassador at Vienna during the Great War. He used to amuse me with his frank statement of his own position when, as he occasionally did, he called me into counsel regarding some point of procedure. "I do not," he said, "know much about diplomacy, but if anyone wants my opinion on chemicals, I'll give him a pretty good one." However, the obligations of his post had to be faced, and one day he told me that he would be very grateful if I would assist him by answering a few questions which his clerk would put to me. I naturally promised to do my best, and a few days later a rather austere young gentleman called and said that he wished on behalf of Colonel Harrison to ask me certain questions. We faced each other in arm-chairs, and I invited him to begin. Surveying me severely through his pince-nez he enquired: "Boutros Pacha Ghali"—he pronounced it Galley—"d'you know him?" "Why, yes," said I, "very well. He is Minister for Foreign Affairs." "Well, what sort of a man is he,



anyway ? ” I described him as one of the most gifted of contemporary Egyptians, well informed and widely read, but added that it was difficult to generalise. Would he therefore tell me which were the particular points on which he desired information. He then enquired whether Boutros was a Mohammedan. I replied that he was not. He was a Copt. “ A Copt ! ” said my interviewer, “ what’s that ? ” I tried hastily to summarize the history and character of the Coptic Church, but evidently only succeeded partially as the next question was : “ Is he in communion with the Church of Rome ? ” That point having been negatively disposed of, he put the more comprehensive question : “ Would you say that he was the kind of man who could stand on his own bottom ? ” The reply entailed an elaborate exposition of the existing situation in Egypt, and an expression of some doubt whether Boutros would long remain Minister if the support of the occupying Power were withdrawn from him. We were, however, evidently not getting on, and so I asked my visitor what was the object he had in view, and suggested that it might be more useful for me to give him some notes on the general situation than merely to reply to his *questionnaire*. “ Well,” he said, “ I do not mind telling you in confidence that the Agent and Consul-General will have to make a report on people and things in this country, and he would wish his information to be correct.”

In the end I found it more profitable to have a direct talk on Egyptian affairs with Harrison him-

self than to supply him vicariously with answers to elementary questions. I was, however, sorry to learn that my visitor had reported me to be rather reserved. I had not meant to be. The United States were fortunate in those days in having few direct interests in Egypt, and Harrison's position was somewhat of a sinecure. So far as it lay in his power to give or withhold support I always found him on the side of the angels, by which in the present instance I mean the occupying power.

Digressions are inevitable when the storehouse of memory is being ransacked, and I have wandered away from the centre of life in Cairo in the 'nineties, where we rapidly settled down into the happy family at the Agency. There Cromer would be early at his table, and a series of visits occupied no small part of the morning. The Financial Adviser was a constant attendant, reporting the progress made in Ministerial Councils with the most recent schemes of development. Heads of Departments would be received to plead for the reforms which they had most at heart in their several administrations, only too often to be disappointed in days when a very careful selection had to be made among the most urgent claims on expenditure. The Everlasting No of the last ten years was, however, now not always opposed to the eager reformer. But Cromer required to be profoundly convinced of the necessity before he would consent to the addition of one more British official to the comparatively small number who were engaged in remodelling the public service. Notables from the provinces,

religious sheikhs or members of the Legislative Council would be introduced by Boyle, whose unrivalled gift of interpretation ensured the conversion into the most ceremonious Arabic of the more positive crudities of the Anglo-Saxon. To him also fell the task of examining a vast number of petitions and complaints. The greater the influence of the occupying Power the larger the influx of representations and appeals, which thus served as a barometer of the public estimate of the balance of power. Business interviews and conversations with journalists fell to some extent to my province. I was the more concerned to spare Cromer as far as possible in the latter duty after he wrote to me that a certain young gentleman had, "with infinite tact, asked me to give him materials out of which to concoct my own obituary notice in *The Times*. I told him that the question was not one which interested me." So much had always to be done in Cairo directly and by word of mouth that it was often not possible until the afternoon to deal with current correspondence and reports to the Foreign Office.

However great the pressure of work might be Cromer always found some time in the day, whether early or late in the evening, for reading. History and the great Greek and Latin authors were his constant resource. He had taken up the classics rather late in life, alleging that when he was a boy he had not been considered worth educating. I believe, however, he had inherited from his mother, who must have been an exception to the majority



of her Victorian contemporaries, a love for classical literature. At one time hardly a day would pass without his reading a book of Homer or some pages from one of the great tragedians. At another he would be absorbed in the historians, and occasionally would propound to us a question as to the interpretation of an obscure passage in Thucydides. These humanistic tastes he shared with his brother, the late Thomas Baring, with whom he had much in common. There was even a physical resemblance which more than once deceived me at a certain distance. Philosophy did not seem to have the same attraction for him. Nor could he be induced to read modern poetry. He had stopped short at Dryden. I tried in vain to make him read Browning. It was evident that the suggestive and imaginative made no appeal to him. He could admit the merits of the stanza from *Obermann Once More*, beginning "The east bowed low before the blast." But it did not tempt him further to explore the beauties of Matthew Arnold. I was the more flattered when one day he expressed appreciation of some lines I had written on the death of Tennyson. Nor could I ever discern in him any real interest in art or architecture. To admire a primitive was to him so incomprehensible as almost to seem an affectation. Though he was never intolerant regarding the tastes and inclinations of others, his own mind seemed only receptive of the positive and the concrete.

So far as he was interested in home politics he claimed to be a Liberal. He had in fact at one

time contemplated standing for Parliament in the Liberal interest. It was, he told me, as I have already mentioned in the preceding volume, Mr. Gladstone who had rather dissuaded him from doing so, maintaining that the work of the Liberal party was finished with the last extension of the franchise, and that it had no prospects in the immediate future. He expressed the opinion that it was this conviction, coupled with a reviving ambition for power, which had made Gladstone in later years take up the Irish question. Cromer had it in common with the Liberals that free-trade was to him almost a principle of dogma which it was heretical to doubt. He had heard me one day raise the question of the advantage of retaliation as a weapon in certain circumstances, and observed to my wife, more in pity than in anger, that he knew there were certain mentalities which could see things that way.

He was curiously diffident as a public speaker. Towards the close of our time in Egypt, when my wife was interested in starting a nursing home and had induced him to address the British colony on the subject, she was much struck with his apparent nervousness as they drove together to the meeting, and his anxiety afterwards to know whether she thought he had acquitted himself well. I have always understood that the occasional speeches which he made in the House of Lords did not impress that critical assembly. In private conversation he expressed his thought with lucidity and conviction. But he was a man of action rather than a speaker.



This characteristic of Cromer reminds me of the answer given by a Japanese gentleman to an acquaintance of mine who asked why a very eminent fellow-countryman of his was so parsimonious of his words. "I know," he said, "that Baron —— is regarded as one of your biggest men, but he says very little." The reply was "Baron —— man of action. In Japan men of action not speaking much, but acting."

Cromer drafted important telegrams and composed a great part of the annual reports himself. But when a despatch had to be written he had a way, which was rather disconcerting at first, of giving me a rapid summary of what was in his mind, or of a conversation which he had just had, and then asking me to prepare a draft in that sense. There was no time to take notes, and very concentrated attention was necessary if no point was to be missed. As far as possible he delegated responsible work to others. In one of his letters to me, regarding an issue with Kitchener, he wrote: "One of the reasons why Egypt has been brought round is that I have never done anything myself that I could get done for me. It is almost impossible to make the soldiers see this. They agree to decentralisation in principle, and in practice centralise everything."

After luncheon he would either play a few games of tennis at Ghezireh or drive out some distance into the country and then take a walk along the canals with Boyle, or sometimes with myself. During these walks many projects were elaborated. It was a characteristic habit of his to anticipate his



own decisions by free discussion in conversation, nor did he confine himself to talking them over with his staff. In later years, especially after the death of the first Lady Cromer, he would take my wife, to whom he was much attached, for drives and open all out that was on his mind. It was his way of thinking aloud.

In those days it was still the custom that the carriages of the foreign representatives should be preceded in the town itself by running *syces*, whose function was to clear the way among the straggling pedestrians and donkeys for the chariots of the mighty. With white wands in their hands and flying sleeves, shouting their warning cry, they were picturesque figures in the Cairo of the last century, and their long bare brown legs covered the ground with extraordinary speed in front of the trotting horses. The tall figure in the grey frock-coat and white hat sitting in the carriage was familiar to every one and the object of many friendly salutations. "El Lord," as he was called by every one down to the very donkey boys, seemed then unconsciously to dominate the city by the Nile.

Although Cromer came into the diplomatic service late after filling many other posts and knew little of its old traditions, he instinctively fell into line with them and adopted a family relationship with his staff. This had been the practice of Lord Lyons which was carried on by his pupil Sir Edward Malet. Both of them took great pains to form the young men who served under them. Malet had a way of pointing out to us our mistakes with a kindli-

ness which made it a pleasure to be instructed, and of guiding our judgments as though we were his sons rather than his secretaries. It was from the school of Lyons and Malet that some of the ablest diplomatists among my contemporaries issued. I am not sure that the same close association exists to-day. Even in my own time it was tending to disappear when former permanent under-secretaries from the Foreign Office, who had no foreign experience, were sent abroad as ambassadors and displayed rather the attitude of the schoolmaster than that of the head of the family towards the juniors.

The Agency was a sound school in which to study administration and, if there was less obvious occasion there for diplomacy in the accepted sense, Egypt offered ample opportunity for learning the management of men which diplomatists above all require to practise. We had all of us unbounded confidence in our chief. During the eight years of my association with him we had to steer among constant shoals, through which one did not always see a ready issue. But Cromer always gave me the comforting feeling of a rock against which to lean. He was often preoccupied himself, though only those who knew him intimately might detect the symptoms. He would fill and half smoke and empty an unnecessary number of pipes while we surveyed the tangle and discussed the prospects of unravelling it. But when eventually he would say with something which was almost a smile, "I have a plan. We will await developments," I felt that all was well.



At the head of Egyptian society was the Khedive's uncle Prince Hussein, who in 1914 became the first Sultan of Egypt. He was the most, it might almost be said the only, public-spirited member of the Khedivial family. A practical agriculturist, he administered his estates with great success, and he kept in touch with the country people, who looked up to him with the respect which is instinctively felt in the East for a great gentleman. The love and care which he lavished on the beautiful garden of his palace at Ghizeh, where the Prince of Wales had been lodged in 1889, naturally indicated him for the position of first President of the Egyptian Horticultural Society, which created a new interest and did excellent work. His tastes, like those of most Egyptians, were more in sympathy with French than with English culture. But he was eminently unpartisan and genuinely appreciated the results accomplished under British guidance. His younger brother and successor, Fuad, the reigning King of Egypt, had been only a boy at the time of Ismail's deposition and had been brought up in Italy. He was consequently less in touch with the feeling of the country than Prince Hussein, who though he had travelled considerably remained essentially Egyptian.

Then there was Princess Nazli, who had entirely emancipated herself from the traditional seclusion of harem life and received gentlemen as readily as ladies. Her boudoir was full of portraits of the senior British officers of 1882. Her unconventionality seemed to arouse little protest. The stricter



old-fashioned Egyptians only shrugged their shoulders and said with a smile, "*Enfin, que voulez-vous, c'est la Princesse Nazli.*" She was a clever woman, and though she had good looks was curiously destitute of feminine vanity. Her budget of information was always interesting.

To the visitor from Europe the best known of Egyptians was no doubt the hospitable Izzet Pasha, who was connected by marriage with the Khedivial family and disposed of a considerable fortune. So liberal was his interpretation of his obligations to society that when he left Cairo in the summer for Europe, a witty Frenchman was heard to say that Izzet had gone to Paris to return the hospitalities which he had offered in Egypt during the winter. He had the misfortune to be in Constantinople in the summer of 1914, and being unable to return to Egypt with the outbreak of war he fell under some suspicion, for which I am convinced there was no justification. No one who knew him would suspect him of taking a hand in politics. But it was not until a long time after the war had ended that he was allowed to return.

My wife paid visits to a certain number of cultivated and agreeable Egyptian ladies, but such salons, with the exception of that of Princess Nazli, were of course closed to me. Polygamy was practically extinct among the Egyptians of the upper and cosmopolitan class, and the influence of their wives was, as in many other countries, considerable. The long retention of the children in the narrow circle of the harem has probably had much to do

with preserving conservative traditions in the East. But signs of revolt are growing more apparent to-day, and many Egyptian ladies who travel in Europe, temporarily at any rate while they are there, emerge from seclusion. Many of them have received a home education from European governesses, which has given them a wider outlook than the male members of the family, and not a few have taken a prominent if not an always well-balanced part in recent political manifestations. One of the ministers, who though reputed to be wealthy was also notoriously careful, once gave us his views on polygamy. There were, he said, few modern fortunes capable of maintaining the several households which the multiplication of wives entailed. Clearly if you gave one of your wives a pearl necklace or a new carriage, the other, or others, must also have pearl necklaces or new carriages. You see for yourself, he urged, that it would be quite impossible to keep this up. "Et puis, Monsieur," he added, "il y a le côté moral qu'il ne faut pas perdre de vue."

And this reminds me of a story current in Cairo in the winter of 1888-89, when the then Bishop of Salisbury paid a visit to the Nile. Travellers in Egypt counted on eliciting from their dragoman much information useful to the politician, the writer, or the superior person. The dragoman, after the manner of the Oriental, generally answers their questions in the way which he is quick to perceive will be most appreciated. Thus evacuationists or occupationists respectively seldom failed to find their estimates of the advantages or dis-



advantages of British control confirmed during a trip up the river. The bishop was little concerned with political issues, but he was troubled with a holy horror of polygamy. He had been fortunate enough to secure a dragoman who appeared entirely to share his views, and he gathered abundant comforting evidence that there was a growing feeling against it in Egypt. Taking leave of his dragoman at the station he gave him a present of five pounds and, benevolently smiling as the train began to move, enquired what Mahmoud proposed to do with the money. "Now I got him," said Mahmoud, "I find another wife."

Cairo was still full of interesting types, survivors of the old order. There was Della Sala Pasha, an Italian who had been aide-de-camp to the unfortunate Emperor Maximilian in Mexico, and had secured a similar position at the Khedivial Court, where his wife acted as a kind of unofficial *grande maîtresse*, and Baron Malortie, of Hannoverian origin, a free-lance of many adventures who occupied a small post as Director of the Egyptian Press-bureau. There was Ambroise Sinadino, Rothschild's agent, the most Parisian of Greeks, with a name which recalled that of a reigning house of old Byzantium. No local intrigue or entanglement escaped his omniscience, and he acted as a living ear of Dionysus which faithfully reported the rumours of the market-place. In company with Nubar Innes of the Finance he composed and produced an annual *Revue*, which travestied all the episodes of the past year, political, social, or scandalous. There was



also a cultivated and agreeable society of Sephardim origin, of which the Cattauis, the Suarez and the Rollos were the mainstay. Our insular countrymen took little pains to enlarge their acquaintance in a direction which involved knowledge of French, but when they did so they were amply rewarded.

Among the foreign representatives in Egypt a few were perennials, others came and went. For some of the smaller countries it was a diplomatic backwater; to one or two of the great Powers it offered a fertile field for opportunities which might "serve." It was a great pleasure to us to have there that stirring gentleman of Emilia who afterwards so worthily represented Italy in London, Senator Pansa and his handsome wife. Baron Heyking, the German agent, was succeeded by an old colleague of mine in Rome, who was also to be a future colleague in Stockholm, Herr Felix von Müller. He again gave place to Count Paul Metternich, who was also well known in London. I always regarded him as a friendly element from conviction. He was economic of words, but looked very sapient, with a rather Scotch habit of reverting to the last subject of conversation but two, after taking his time to think the matter out. Monsieur Cogordan, who followed the Marquis de Reverseau as French representative, was generally and deservedly popular. His brief was presumably in accordance with the prevailing sentiment of the day in France. But while he was a most loyal servant of his own country one could feel instinctively that he was working to the best of his ability for better

relations, and that he would approach questions at issue without prejudice. Thanks to his influence so long as he remained in Cairo a perhaps inevitable opposition was minimised, and a pleasant personal relation was maintained. The Austro-Hungarian Consul-General, Baron Heidler von Egeregg, whom I had known in Berlin, had in Egypt become an enthusiastic amateur of golf, and as British as any of us. His chief preoccupation was the protection of Catholic Copts, to whose affairs he devoted a tireless energy which seemed almost disproportionate to the paucity of their numbers. His staff was in consequence apt to complain of overwork. But so far as we were concerned Heidler was a good colleague and nothing upset his equanimity, not even Maxwell's enquiry as to how many g's he had in his Egeregg. Monsieur Koyander, the Russian, was a dark horse. Cromer had a high opinion of his ability as an exponent of Russian diplomatic methods. They were not in those days always actively employed in assisting us. But Koyander, himself, when not otherwise instructed, was friendly. The existence of capitulations gave the representatives of the Powers which enjoyed them special opportunities for intervening in Egyptian affairs, and theoretically there was no distinction between their official position and that of the British Agent and Consul-General. But behind the latter was the army of occupation, small but sufficient, and the acceptance by the Egyptian authorities of the "Granville doctrine." The normal situation in international issues entitled us to count on the



reasonable support of Austria-Hungary and Italy and to anticipate the opposition of France and Russia, while Germany, ostensibly a supporter, was apt to gravitate to one or the other group according as her interests at the moment rather than the merits of the case dictated. Perhaps no political machinery in the world contained so many old pieces, which for various reasons could not be replaced, as the Egyptian, and it had therefore to be constantly lubricated with the oil of compromise.

The oldest British inhabitant in the social world was Sir Alexander Baird, who owned a good deal of property in and around Cairo. He was, however, absent during my first year, having been for some time in a condition of health which precluded travelling. There were annuals whom the winter season brought back, such as the Locke-Kings, to whose enterprise the Mena House at the Pyramids owes its existence. The Charlie Beresfords were constant visitors when he was on half-pay. St. Loe Strachey and his wife were guests of the Cromers, and the *Spectator* was a very faithful ally of the great proconsul. Professor Sayce and the late Marquis of Northampton, who had retired from the diplomatic service on his succession, had their own Dahabeeahs on the river, and sooner or later most of our acquaintance felt the call of the Nile.

On an old Arab estate in the outskirts of Cairo, Sheikh Obeyd, generally referred to by its owner as "my house in the desert," might be found Wilfrid Blunt, living in studied discomfort and affecting the dress of the bedawin supplemented by riding



boots. There he and Lady Anne kept their stud of Arab horses with a retinue of bedawin to look after them. And there visitors who went to see him were no doubt duly impressed when the hours for tea arrived by the large wooden bowl of camel's milk which was brought in to their host, who always courteous, asked permission to drink it, saying, "I never take anything but this." Faddists in diet are inconvenient to entertain, and Blunt, who was hardly consistent, occasionally became a problem to his friends. The late Lady Galloway told me that once, when he was staying with her in Scotland, she, knowing his idiosyncrasies, enquired whether any particular form of food was at that time indispensable to his happiness. The month was November. Blunt thanked her and said he was living chiefly on peaches.

He had begun life in the diplomatic service and had been the colleague of Malet, with whom he afterwards came into conflict in Egypt when he took up the cause of Arabi. Exceptionally good-looking and clever in his wrong-headedness, with all the courage of his unusual opinions, he was unquestionably a poet, and was bound to have attracted attention even if he had not deliberately chosen to be a *frondeur*. With all his versatility, however, it was only his poetry that really counted.

A former diplomatic colleague to whom I had mentioned the Eastern garments which Blunt used to wear in "my house in the desert," told me that he always had a taste for dressing up, and that when in Spain he used often to appear in the costume of

a bull-fighter. But then he had studied the art of the Toreador and he had killed his bull.

There was an undoubted attraction in his personality, and a great charm in his unconventional conversation. But while modest in regard to his own real achievement as a poet, he was in other respects so great an egoist that one was tempted to doubt whether his championship of unpopular causes sprang solely from conviction and was not due in part to pose. I do not wish to be unjust, but I could never quite reject the first diagnosis which I formed, namely, that Blunt having won his laurels as a poet by the *Love Sonnets of Proteus* in 1880, and having married Byron's granddaughter, felt called upon to emulate the champion of Greece by identifying himself with a national issue and therefore, *faute de mieux*, took up the cause of Arabi. The Egyptians in any case showed little regard for "the mad Englishman," as he came to be known among them, and he was often the victim of those who imposed with extravagant stories upon a credulous temperament, eager to find confirmation of his theories.

Having seen it affirmed in biographical notices since his death that Blunt was chiefly instrumental in saving Arabi from the capital penalty after his rebellion, I feel it an obligation to record another side of this story which I had directly from Sir Edward Malet, and made a note of at the time. I was travelling with him from Paris to London. At Amiens, where trains used then to stop for some time, we got out to stretch our legs, and on the



platform he saw Wilfrid Blunt, whom at that time I did not know. We went towards him. But he slipped away, and Malet remarked that it was evident that he was intentionally avoiding us. I enquired why he should do so and Malet replied that when you were conscious of having behaved badly to anyone you were not generally anxious to meet him. He then gave me the following details concerning the Arabi trial. He had made all the necessary arrangements with the Khedive Tewfik for the deportation of Arabi, whose life was to be spared. But it was particularly desirable not to revive the whole scandal by a trial at which inevitable revelations would make indulgence much more difficult. Blunt, however, intervened and engaged Broadley, a brilliant advocate unable to practise in England, who was supposed to have acquired a considerable knowledge of Eastern law, for the defence. On arriving in Egypt Broadley came to see Malet, who frankly told him how matters stood and explained the steps he had taken to save Arabi. The settlement already concluded might even be compromised if Blunt persisted in troubling the waters. Broadley replied that he had been retained as an advocate and could only carry out the instructions given him. But he said that as Malet had been so frank with him he felt bound to show him the letter of instructions which he had received from his principal. In this letter there was a passage warning Broadley above all to beware of Malet, who was "narrow-minded and blood-thirsty," and would do all that he could to



bring about the condemnation of Arabi in order to justify his policy. Malet was much concerned that a former colleague with whom he had been on terms of Christian names could have expressed an opinion of him which he must have known to be entirely unwarranted.

I make no comments on this story which is told exactly as it was told to me. But it left a sense of prejudice which I had some difficulty in overcoming when I first met the Blunts in Greece. For Lady Anne I always entertained the greatest regard, though unfortunately just before I left Egypt my interpretation of my official duties led to a difference of opinion with Blunt in which she warmly supported her husband. It was generally Lord Cromer with whom he found himself in conflict in the various episodes which brought him back to public notice in Egypt, but the last one to which I shall refer in its proper place occurred while I was in charge. It formed the subject of a White Paper laid before Parliament.

Most of my particular group of friends were intimate with Blunt, who entertained them as his annual guests at the "Crabbet Club" in his house in Sussex, where many brilliant things were said and read. He had the artist's temperament, and was excellent company "out of school." But as a controversialist he seemed to me to have no sense of fair play, and his published diaries reveal an entire absence of scruple in the betrayal of confidences. The opinions there recorded are, however, not likely to be taken very seriously. I shall not

emulate his example by recording mere gossip current in Cairo concerning Blunt, and shall confine myself to episodes of public notoriety.

One of these arose from his ambition to visit the oasis of Siwa, the site of the temple of Jupiter Ammon, which lies in the western desert some sixteen days camel-ride from Cairo. Though in Egyptian territory it had never been controlled by the administration, and was only occasionally visited by coastguard patrols. As the population were adherents of the fanatical sect of the Senoussia visitors were notoriously discouraged from attempting to penetrate into this solitary oasis unless accompanied by a strong escort of the desert coastguard. It would, however, have been alien to Wilfrid Blunt's mentality to request the assistance and protection of the Egyptian Government or its British advisers. He accordingly started for Siwa with his own camels and bedawin, without disclosing his intended expedition to the authorities. When he eventually reached the outskirts of Siwa the excited population came out and asked him who he was. Blunt, though wearing bedawin clothes, was conscious that his Arabic was not strong enough for him to be taken for a native of the country, and passed himself off as a Syrian merchant. Whereupon the inhabitants of the oasis dragged him off his camel and proceeded to beat him with their sticks. He then endeavoured, it seems, to explain that he was an Englishman, only to be reminded that the clothes he wore belied him. His position was a very unpleasant one, but eventually his bedawin



succeeded in persuading the unhospitable Siwaites that in spite of his Eastern robes he really was what he represented himself to be. On his return to Cairo he came to Cromer to protest against the treatment he had received and invited him to despatch a punitive expedition to obtain satisfaction. He was of course told that he must have been perfectly well aware that the administration accepted no responsibility for the population of Siwa, who were practically outside the law, and that if he chose to go there without giving notice to anyone he had brought his misfortunes on himself.

It was not until some twenty years later, after the war had led to closer contact with certain members of the Senoussi sect, that I heard an echo of this story from the other side. The old Senoussi sheikh, who in my Egyptian days was omnipotent in the oases, received constant information from agents in Cairo. One of these, a venerable merchant in the bazaar, was an acquaintance of mine, and he from time to time gave us information regarding the progress of this powerful and exclusive fraternity. It seems that the old man had learned from Cairo of Blunt's intention to go to Siwa and of the date of his departure, from which it was easy to calculate the time of his arrival. On the day on which he was due at Siwa the sheikh, who was in the neighbourhood, was engaged in the rosary of prayer with a group of his disciples, when he suddenly became silent and assumed the aspect of one in a trance. His followers watched him breathlessly. After a long pause he spoke as if a vision



had been revealed to him. "I smell the flesh of the accursed. He is approaching the sacred oasis!" These or some such words fell from his lips. "What shall we do, master?" his followers enquired; "shall we kill him?" "No," said the sheikh, "do not kill him. Beat him a little, and let him go." And thus it was, according to the story which was told me, that the population went out to meet the traveller, while the Senoussi sheikh greatly enhanced his reputation as a prophet inspired.

The officers of the old army of occupation, of whom Nubar Pasha was an enthusiastic admirer, were an important element in the social life of Cairo. The Highland regiments, the Camerons and the Seaforths, were especial favourites. The black Soudanese battalions of the Egyptian Army, who also marched to the bagpipes, regarded themselves as their especial comrades in arms. The 21st Lancers, the latest cavalry regiment in the Army List which had still to win its spurs, was at Abassiyeh through the greater part of my residence in Egypt. A story was current of one of the few bad characters in the regiment being brought before the colonel, who glanced at his familiar charge-sheet and said in despair, "I really don't know what to do with this." "Put it in your colours, Colonel," said the delinquent, "there's plenty of room there." But the name of Omdurman was soon to be the first to fill the vacant space. The tablets of memory also recall the curious phrase of a charming young American lady at a tea-party, who having just seen the handsomest captain of the Seaforths, remarked to a friend on

her arrival: "My dear, you have just missed his most beautiful Highland officer, he had not got as many samples on his coat as that one, but he was good looking!" Time and the battlefields have sadly depleted the number of old friends who enlivened the merry days of the 'nineties, and those that I still meet are grizzled veterans with many letters to their names. A recent encounter with a gallant Irishman who played a great part in the social and sporting life of Cairo, and a very distinguished one in the Nile and South African campaigns, reminded me of a certain evening twenty years ago when he was entertaining some friends at the Ghezireh Palace Hotel, and was dissatisfied with his dinner. He sent for the manager, the great Luigi Steinschneider, and protested: "Mr. Luigi, it's really too bad, I ordered this dinner a fortnight ago, and it's stone cold!" At a stormy meeting of the Sporting Club, when Cromer was in the chair, a member had enquired whether the controversial proposal under discussion was likely to prove remunerative. The same distinguished officer interposed: "Lord Cromer! Will you allow me to answer that question? The answer to that question is that it is a question which cannot be answered." The late Professor Mahaffy, who was asked by a lady to give her a definition of an Irish bull, expressed his inability to frame one, but explained that it certainly differed from any other kind of bull in that it was always pregnant.

Early in 1895, overcoming Cromer's dislike to the absence of any of his staff, we accompanied my



brother-in-law Murray Guthrie and his wife up the Nile on a steamer which he had chartered. The glamour of Greece was then still too strong with me to be altogether displaced by the influence of Egyptian art, which only made its appeal to me in subsequent years. As yet it seemed too remote, too lacking in human interest, and I was heretical enough to appreciate the Hellenistic development which the real Egyptologist despises. The expedition was nevertheless full of interest and two experiences stand out conspicuously in my Egyptian memories, both of them connected with Assouan. The first was a migration of crown cranes, flying low and descending the river in great numbers. The second was the arrival of Slatin Pasha after his escape from Omdurman across the eastern desert.

Early one morning our dragoman on the steamer reported a rumour in the bazaar that Slatin had come in at daybreak. I rushed off to the military head-quarters and there indeed found the prisoner of the Khalifa whose rescue the Intelligence Department had for years been trying to accomplish. Wingate had been able through private agents, only known by a letter or a number, to establish communication with the ex-governor of an Equatorial province in the impenetrable Mahdist capital, and at last his efforts, conducted with the profoundest secrecy, had been crowned with success. After twelve years of detention Slatin, eluding his pursuers in a series of hairbreadth escapes, was restored to civilisation.

Lean and haggard from insufficient nourishment, bent and shaggy-bearded, with his feet covered with sores from his terrible tramp over the stony wilderness after the camel which was to carry him had to bear his sick owner instead, he seemed hardly as yet to realise that his long trial was over. I spoke to him in German, and at first his replies came slowly. His own language had grown unfamiliar. For twelve years and more he had spoken nothing but Arabic. A steamer was going down the river that afternoon, and in it Slatin, shaved and clad once more in the garments of the West provided by the officers of the garrison, started for Cairo. The band of the black regiment stationed at Assouan spent most of the day in learning the Austrian National Anthem, and by the time he mounted the gangway to go on board they managed to play something sufficiently like it to bring tears to his eyes.

I persuaded him to write an account of his nocturnal evasion and subsequent adventures for Harry Cust, who was still editing the *Pall Mall Gazette*. I translated it into English, and it was eventually incorporated in the book in which he and Wingate collaborated, *Fire and Sword in the Soudan*. It was a remarkable production for a man who had not had a pen in his hand for twelve years. After a brief interval we saw Slatin, who now joined the Egyptian intelligence service, beginning life again as he had left it when a young man. He became a conspicuous figure at every dance. Time's revenges were to carry him back to



Omdurman with Kitchener's victorious advance. After the reconquest his invaluable services to the Soudan Government continued until the outbreak of the Great War made it impossible for an enemy subject to remain on the establishment. The severance of that long connection was viewed with real regret by all who appreciated his loyal and sterling qualities, and his old friends were glad to know that on his return to Austria he had devoted himself to Red Cross work, in which I do not doubt that when occasion offered he rendered every assistance to our countrymen in difficulties.

Charlie Beresford and his wife were at Assouan, and there I met him in the bazaar, and heard him assuring the ladies, who were adorning themselves with long strings of beads, that when they went a little farther south to Wady Halfa, where they would find it very hot, these would be regarded by local custom as quite sufficient clothing. I was glad to have seen Phylæ before the great lake eventually created by the Assouan barrage entirely altered its character, making the beautiful temple flush with the water. It was bitterly cold descending the Nile in the teeth of a strong north wind.

My wife had encouraged a brilliant young lady scholar from Newnham to come to Egypt and assist her in her classical studies. Her zeal for the wider extension of female education was a constant occasion for amiable banter from Cromer and Boyle. She had chaffingly suggested that the latter and the popular Dean Butcher, whose devout and scholarly instincts did not exclude a certain affection

for the drama, might support by their presence a series of lectures on the Greek tragedians, which this lady was to give for the enlargement of the intellectual horizon of ladies in Cairo. The incorrigible Oriental secretary, who seldom definitely declined, but rarely fulfilled an engagement, replied that he trusted she would see his reverend colleague and himself "partaking in moderation of such gentle refreshment, and benignly smiling, like two genial Gullivers at the well-meant efforts of literary Lilliputians, or perhaps like two modern Longinuses, encouraging by their countenance and approbation the soarings of the young Zenobias." He would draw the attention of his colleague to an apt parallel in Cook's voyages, where it was described how the attractive, amiable, but intellectually inferior Otaheitans invented pretty games, imitating drills and church parades. In the meanwhile he proposed to purchase the requisite collegiate equipment, namely a vinaigrette, crochet-bag, and a large box of chocolate-creams. A similar spirit of levity was afterwards displayed by our chief, who, when my wife took the initiative in founding a ladies' club, sent a pincushion and powder-box for the new institution to testify to his encouragement and support.

To break the length of a second summer in Egypt I decided to take half my leave in May, and we devised a very perfect holiday. My wife and I, with Clinton Dawkins and Arthur Stanley, went by a Russian steamer to Piræus, where a small cutter chartered from Corfu had come to meet us.



We transferred ourselves and our stores from the steamer to the *Undine* in Piræus harbour, and after a visit to Athens set sail for the island sea. The May weather was ideal, and we cruised for about a fortnight from island to island. It was Stanley's first real taste of the joy of life after his long and weary illness and it was delightful to see his enjoyment of the open-air existence, and the realisation that he could swim with only his arms in the buoyant Ægean. A little land-locked harbour received us the first night at Zea (Ceos), the birthplace of Simonides. Then we explored Thermia (Cythnos), Serpho, Melos, and the beautiful island of Andros, where there are many springs, and the hill-side waterways were rosy with oleander. We only came across scanty traces of antiquity. The raids of the feudal barons, the centuries of piracy under Crescent or Cross have left these islands bare of all but the loveliness of colour which their rocky masses assume, pearl-grey at dawn, amethystine in the late afternoon and rose-flushed in the sunset. Even in Roman times many of them seem to have been abandoned to solitude. As we learn from the epigram of Antipater of Thessalonica:

The glory that was yours long years has gone the way of fate,  
Siphnos and Pholegandros are not more desolate.

One character is common to the island villages in contrast to those of the Greek mainland, and that is the tidiness and cleanness of the houses. The limewash on their white faces seems to be constantly renewed, and the pots and coppers within shine as

brilliantly as in a Dutch interior. They breed a stout race of seafolk, good fellows, friendly and hospitable, the best element in modern Greece. Their spirit of adventure and enterprise is inborn and hereditary. A few young men, who have probably had their sea training in the Greek navy, associate themselves together. With their hard-earned savings they buy wood and build a small craft. On this, with a few loaves of bread and some black olives for commissariat, they take the sea and engage in the small coasting trade from port to port. Thrifty and ambitious they will in a few years time have secured a larger vessel—and eventually a tramp steamer, with vistas of still greater developments before them. You will find the Greek islander as a pioneer of petty commerce on the outskirts of civilisation all over the world.

Our fortnight among the islands passed like a dream, and the same Russian steamer took us back to Alexandria. We had secured a villa at Ramleh for the summer, and there after the Cromers left for England the same party forgathered. Dawkins was acting as financial adviser during the summer, and thus the essential elements of the hierarchy were together under the same roof. It was a pleasant life enough, with bathing from the end of the garden, and rides in the early morning or late evening into the desert or along the coast to Aboukir. The first sight of that memorable bay gave me a thrill of emotion. "The place was silent and aware." We did not, however, like the late Sir William Buller, seek to find a living memory there.



That restlessly active-minded general, when in command of the British garrison at Alexandria, had heard that there was a man still living at Aboukir who was said to be more than a hundred years old. He rode out and found the venerable sheikh, whom he proceeded to interrogate. Did he remember when he was very young a number of great ships lying in the bay in heavy weather, and then other ships coming round the island and fighting with them. Yes. He remembered the big ships very well. Could he recall how it ended—did he see a big ship driven ashore, turning over on its side? Oh, yes, certainly he did, and he indicated the very spot where he saw a ship heel over, so that everything came out of it. And what, asked the general in a fever of excitement, what came out of it? “Melons,” said the old man.

I went in the course of the summer to the festival at Tantah, which in old days had a strange priapic feature, now long since suppressed. It must have been a survival from very early times, many centuries before the birth of the Moslem saint to whom the day was dedicated. Scenes of a lupercal character used also to be enacted at night during the annual festival of Tents on the anniversary of the prophet's birthday, which I have described in my former volume. That gaily illuminated night-fair seemed already to have lost much of its brilliancy since I saw it in 1889.

A picturesque ceremony which was very popular during my first years in Cairo, the cutting of the Khalig, has now disappeared, though the cele-

bration of the Nile flood, the Wafa-el-Nil, of which it was an incident, is still maintained. The Khalig was a canal which ran from the Nile opposite Roda island through the centre of the city. Its mouth was closed by a dam during the low Nile season. As soon as the nilometer at Roda had registered eighteen cubits the earliest available day was chosen to cut the dam away with accompaniment of gunfire and due ceremonial. Tradition relates that in olden days a virgin wearing costly jewels was on this occasion thrown into the Khalig as a propitiatory offering to the river god, with largesse which the crowd struggled to retrieve in the water as the Nile stream flowed in. In more enlightened times a doll was substituted for the human sacrifice. There is now no dam to cut away, nor indeed any Khalig or canal, for it has been filled in, and a tram-line runs along its ancient course. But the festival of the Nile flood is still observed as a public holiday, with official attendance and music and fireworks in the evening among tents and booths.

As stationnaire that summer we had the *Cambrian*, which had recently been commissioned by Prince Louis of Battenberg, the late Marquis of Milford Haven, the handsomest of a very good-looking family, who combined remarkable charm with first-rate professional ability. He spent a good deal of his time at the villa. The *Cambrian* was a very happy ship. Mark Kerr, who was number one, used to organize the Wednesday sailing races in Alexandria harbour.

In September my wife returned to England. The



Cromers came back in October just in time to enable me to reach home before the 25th, when our eldest son was born in a little house in Curzon Street which had been lent us by a brother-in-law.

Early in the following year, 1896, the outlook in Egypt became dramatic and exciting. It had for some time been evident that the position of the Italians in Abyssinia was growing more and more difficult. Their defeat in January at Amba Allagi and the investment of Makalleh rendered probable a Dervish attack on Kassala entailing the cutting of their communications, and it was suggested that we might render assistance in diverting such a danger by a demonstration towards Dongola. Kitchener was absent up the river when this proposal was first mooted. Rundle, who was acting for him, and Wingate were therefore called into council.

Cromer's reply to London was that a *coup-de-main* on Suarda, which might entail an eventual advance as far as Dongola, could be considered, but that a movement from Suakin on the Red Sea coast would be better calculated to effect the desired diversion in the menaced region. London on second thoughts preferred the alternative of "waiting to see" whether or not the Dervishes moved towards Kassala. At the end of February or beginning of March confirmation of such a movement was received. Kitchener had now returned. After consultation with him the discussion of a possible advance towards Dongola was resumed, and the difficulties of the financial situation were explained. In Egypt our opinion remained unchanged. We held that the

object in view would be best accomplished by a movement from Suakin to Kokreb and Kor Langheb, which would make the intervening country secure on fairly cheap terms and perhaps without fighting. The decision taken at home was, however, that such action on our part would not be justified. The Dervish power was evidently on the wane, and any movement at that moment would be inopportune. We were, therefore, once more free to devote all our energies to internal development.

Then followed Baratieri's ill-timed advance, inspired, it was said, by information that he was about to be superseded, against the united Abyssinian forces of Shoa and Tigre, massed on the heights which commanded his approach. The result was the disaster of Adua. Crispi, the veteran Prime Minister, who was reported to have telegraphed to him, "Your inaction is worse than a defeat," could not be acquitted of responsibility, and resigned. An old friend, the Duke of Sermoneta, who was spending the winter in Egypt, was suddenly recalled to Rome to take up the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs in a new Government.

Suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, arrived an instruction from London to advance on Dongola. There was no preliminary discussion as to ways and means. The contemplated movement was at once communicated to the British Press with barely the necessary interval of time for us to break the decision to the Khedive, much less to secure the support of the Egyptian Ministers. The news was announced in *The Times* of March 13, disguised as a Reuter



telegram from Cairo. Lord Wolseley, who had been called into consultation when it was decided that something must be done at the thirteenth hour to relieve the Italian situation, had, we were told, considered it desirable to publish the information at once. I cannot of course claim to know what actually occurred at the Cabinet meeting at which this decision was taken, but we gathered that it had been Lord Wolseley's advice which prevailed in favour of a demonstration to Akasheh, in the direction of Dongola, instead of the movement advocated by those on the spot. The Egyptian army and an expenditure of £500,000 would suffice for the object in view. Thereupon Chamberlain was reported to have suggested, "Why not retake Dongola?" No further questions were asked, and the instructions to Cairo were sent forthwith.

This decision, which inevitably involved the initiation of the reconquest of the Soudan four or five years before we were ready for it, taken in London by Ministers, one of whom was said to have admitted that he did not know where Kassala was, imposed immense difficulties on those who had to carry it into effect. No details had been examined and no provision made for the necessary expenditure. We had not, however, long to wait before learning that Egypt was to pay for everything. Every public undertaking would therefore have to be postponed, and not least that of the contemplated Nile reservoirs, in order to provide money for eventualities. Cromer's policy had been first to construct the Nile barrages, and to extend the river railway,

which only went as far as Luxor, up to the existing frontier. The augmented revenue derived from the development of the new land would then enable the Egyptian army to be increased. Thus by successive stages the moment would eventually have been reached at which the reconquest of the Soudan might be contemplated. The situation with which we were confronted, after the capture of Omdurman in 1898, which will be dealt with in subsequent chapters, shows that it was in fact very fortunate that the initiation of the reconquest of the Soudan was not so postponed. But I do not believe that those who took the decision had then any intuition how urgent it really was in British and Egyptian interests to lose no further time.

Money to finance the campaign would have to be taken from the Reserve Fund. To induce the International *Caisse de la Dette* to give the necessary consent by a majority vote, the support of Germany and Austria, as well as of Italy, would have to be secured in order to out-vote France and Russia, whose opposition was inevitable. The French Press had at once proclaimed that the advance was merely a pretext for prolonging the occupation. The Khedive, naturally predisposed to mistrust us, assumed that the action taken was exclusively for the benefit of Italy, and indeed having regard to the time and occasion the assumption was justified. We should have helped Italy more materially by moving some weeks earlier, especially on the lines which Cromer had indicated. Now it was already late. Indeed when all the most pressing obstacles



had been surmounted we were instructed to suspend activities on a report that Kassala was to be evacuated. The rumour proved to be unfounded. The Italians had by a gallant action cleared the Dervishes out of their positions round that station, and driven them back over the Atbara. So we were instructed to go ahead again.

I never admired Cromer more than at this critical moment. His advice had not been followed, and the chief military authority at home had rushed the Government into the alternative plan. He now set to work to make the best of the difficult situation which had been created, and with clearness and dignity submitted all the eventualities. He, Kitchener, Sir Elwin Palmer and myself met in constant conclave. He gave his concentrated attention to what each had to say, always listening to criticisms and accepting them when they were sound. There were two points on which we were all firmly agreed. First, that we must either retake and hold Dongola and its province, or not move up the Nile at all. A mere demonstration, to which opinion at home seemed to be reverting, would only weaken our position. Secondly, that there must be a backing of British troops behind the Egyptian army. Kitchener would require the battalions actually garrisoning Suakin. We knew that the black regiments would fight, but it was still uncertain how far the Egyptian soldier would stand the severe ordeal of the Soudan. I well remember Cromer's weighty words at the meeting at which we adopted these conclusions:

“A good deal will depend on what I say now, and I am not going to send all these fine young men to their deaths for nothing.”

Not long afterwards he received a letter from the Duke of Devonshire in which the latter wrote that he had not realised that any step had been taken by the Cabinet which could not have been modified had Cromer thought fit to contest the instructions. Such a view, however, was manifestly inconsistent with the fact that the Ministerial decision in favour of an advance to Dongola was communicated to the Press almost simultaneously with its transmission to Cairo. Could the Duke have been taken in himself by the form in which Reuter made the announcement?

It afforded a curious instance of the confusion of mind prevailing at home that the War Office continued for some days to telegraph instructions and address enquiries to General Knowles, who had succeeded Sir Frederick Forestier-Walker in command of British troops in Egypt, as if he and the British garrison, and not the Egyptian army, were to undertake the expedition.



### CHAPTER III

The advance towards the Soudan. Conflict with the *Caisse de la Dette*. Roddy Owen arrives. Cholera in Egypt. Joseph Chamberlain at Highbury. Death of R. Owen. The Arabic Press becomes aggressive. Death of Sultan of Zanzibar. Armenian massacres. Occupation of Dongola. The credit accorded by the *Caisse* refunded. Decision to despatch a Mission to Abyssinia. Situation in that country. Composition of Mission. Preparations and departure. Aden. Zeila. Lieut. Harrington.

On the 22nd of March, 1896, I saw the Sirdar off with Wingate and Slatin. It was just a year since I had met the latter at Assouan after his extraordinary escape. So began the operations which were to conclude after two and a half years with the reconquest of Khartoum.

Meanwhile a pretty battle had begun in Cairo over the financial problem. The *Caisse de la Dette* was invited to sanction a credit of £500,000 from Reserves. The Austrian, German and Italian Commissioners associated themselves with the British in consenting. The French and Russian Commissioners not only dissented but claimed that a unanimous resolution was necessary for such a provision. We contested this claim and a decision was postponed for four days. The French threatened to appeal to the Mixed Tribunals for an in-

junction. The majority of the *Caisse* rejoined that they did not recognise the competency of the Mixed Tribunals to deal with the matter. After a further interval of delay the *Caisse* granted the half million by four votes to two, the French and Russian Commissioners recording their protest. The latter also procured the lodging of a *caveat* with the Mixed Courts by a group of bondholders. This led to a second important group appearing on the scene with a demurrer. They urged that to allow a single obstructive commissioner to paralyse the working of the *Caisse* would offer a disastrous precedent, and be prejudicial to their interests. This was the common-sense view, but that was not a necessary reason for its adoption by a jurisprudence governed by a civil code.

It was not without significance that the excitement of public opinion in France, when it was realised that Germany would not support the refusal of funds and that Great Britain had secured a majority vote, led to the resignation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Berthelot, who was believed to favour a better understanding with us. He was succeeded by M. Hanotaux, who lost no time in communicating to the Porte through the French Embassy at Constantinople a memorandum urging an enquiry into the motive for the expedition, and as to why the Sultan had not been consulted. The Suzerain was advised to sanction no steps in Egypt without the concurrence of France and Russia. The document was no doubt intended to be confidential, but such intentions were not always re-



spected at Constantinople by those through whose hands State papers passed. The Russians were more astute. The Ambassador put nothing on paper, but signified his approval of the terms of the French communication. Meanwhile the money had been paid over, the troops had gone forward, and the first stage in the movement was carried out with rapidity and perfect organisation. There was no fighting north of Akasheh, but Colonel Burne-Murdoch, patrolling with the Egyptian cavalry higher up the river, came into contact with Der-vishes and fought a successful action. K. wrote to me: "The thing that has given me the greatest satisfaction during all this business has been the kindly support I have received from the Lord. I never was so well done in my life, and I can tell you when one has a good deal on one's shoulders the confidence it gives one to feel thoroughly strong support at one's back is a comfort."

The Agency was now engaged in another battle, this time with the War Office, which insisted on the purchase by the Egyptian Government of steamers and barges, apparently with a view to an autumn campaign, before we had even received the definite and final pronouncement of policy for which we were pressing. Hostile movements were developing in the neighbourhood of Suakin, and the friendly Arabs, who were always between the devil and the deep sea, protested that they could not hold out unassisted. The precarious tenure of these unfortunate people, whom our original plan would have protected, was probably not realised

at home. Eventually we carried our point. Two Indian battalions were to be sent to Suakin, and British troops from Cairo were to move up to Halfa. The cost of Indian troops was considerable, and we were anxious as to the incursion which their co-operation would entail into the half-million. These two and one Egyptian reserve battalion would replace four Egyptian battalions which had constituted the garrison on the Red Sea Coast. They would be none too many, but if Ghurkas were selected probably sufficient.

The possibility of a desert advance was no sooner in the air than that stormy petrel Roddy Owen turned up from India. He had occupied his time pretty fully and to good purpose since we had parted at Mombasa on New Year's Day in 1893. When Portal returned from Uganda he had remained there, and under Colonel Colville took part in the Unyoro war against Kabarega. His name is linked with the early history of East Africa on account of his plucky dash to Wadelai to plant the British flag there in anticipation of rival competitors. After rejoining his regiment in India he employed his first leave in accompanying the Chitral expedition as correspondent for the *Pioneer*. He had paid a visit to the Pamirs, and then after nine months regimental duty, as soon as leave was once more due, was casting about for a new field of adventure when the news from Egypt brought him to the Nile. He was a useful man in emergencies and I did my best for him with K., who accepted his services. At that time the Curtises from Venice were staying



with us, and though it was rather late in the season they had decided to visit Luxor and Assouan. He went up the river with the old people and laid himself out to be agreeable and informative. When they returned they could not find enough to say in praise of his attention and intelligence.

That consummate horseman and knight-errant of adventure was indeed the most adaptable of men. Shrewd and quick to perceive an opportunity, he also had the magic gift of charm, and was therefore one of those whom fortune protects and to whom many things are forgiven. And no doubt Roddy needed forgiveness at times. When he was A.D.C. to Sir Evelyn Wood the general, realising that the demands on the time of a gentleman rider so much in request entailed unduly frequent absences from duty, observed to him, "I do not seem to have seen very much of you lately, Captain Owen." "My loss, General," was his disarming if somewhat pert reply. When at length after five unsuccessful attempts "Father O'Flynn" carried him to victory in the Grand National in 1892, just before he started for Uganda, he gave up steeplechase riding and determined to take his profession of arms seriously. If you want to get on, Roddy explained to me, you must appear to be well informed on all matters which are exciting general interest. When, therefore, he was invited to a dinner party where he was likely to meet people of importance, he went to his club in the afternoon and read up all the reviews. People of course expected little from him but opinions on horses. But, as he remarked, it is not

very difficult to lure the conversation into the channel you desire. Having done so he then, full of his afternoon's reading, became illuminating on the subject of discussion, whether it might be bimetallism or the aims of Russia in Central Asia. The other guests were bound to go away with the impression that Major Owen was a very well-informed young man. During his brief stay in Cairo he was persuaded in spite of his protests to try a gallop, and the following day rode and won a really good race. He had, he told me, always had an ambition to play a part in the reconquest of the Nile, and I saw him off without misgiving. Alas, I was never to see him again.

In the beginning of May cholera made its appearance in Alexandria. A case was detected in a house inhabited by a family from Algiers or Morocco. The sanitary authorities put a cordon round the place. But it had to be removed in consequence of the protest of the French consul, who claimed the family as French-protected persons. Some seven infection-carriers were thus left at large in the city. The French Representative in Cairo, M. Cogordan, whom we all respected and appreciated, always did his best to act in a spirit of common sense, and he eventually rectified the initial error and sanctioned the isolation of the infected family. Whether or not the mischief was due to this unfortunate exercise of capitulation privilege the epidemic made considerable progress, and in due course spread to Cairo, where by the end of May statistics showed fifty to sixty deaths a day. The



efforts of the energetic Rogers Pasha and his second in command in the sanitary department, Pinching Bey, were nevertheless successful in confining it within reasonable limits in a country where the habits of the people inevitably stimulate the dissemination of disease. Their perseverance at last succeeded in inducing the village sheikhs and omdehs to co-operate in enforcing sanitary measures.

Cromer felt obliged under existing conditions to renounce his leave in the early summer, and urged me to go home in May and so give him a chance of getting away later. We managed with some difficulty to secure a cabin on a P. & O. bound for Brindisi and Venice, in which the whole of the Jewish colony in Alexandria were evacuating that city until the cholera should have subsided. Eighty children, who moreover brought measles with them, made the ship a pandemonium. Happily before we landed at Venice the cholera incubation period had expired, and there was no quarantine. By the time we reached Paris, after a few days at Venice and an expedition to Bergamo, news had arrived of Kitchener's successful battle at Firket, which revealed what ten years of training and discipline under British officers had done for the Egyptian Army. It was the more satisfactory that all had gone well, as in London there had been a tendency to depreciate Kitchener and to question his qualifications for conducting the campaign.

Under the genial auspices of Austen Chamberlain we paid our first visit to Highbury, and learned to know the illustrious Joseph in the intimacy of his

family. Among the guests was Gerald Balfour. We had a long discussion in the smoking-room about the management of savage or semi-savage races. Chamberlain confessed to an instinctive prejudice against the punishment of flogging. It might be necessary, but he did not wish to hear of its use, and he was convinced that public opinion in England would never tolerate the official recognition of a penalty which involved, as he contended, loss of dignity to the man. Balfour and I were rather in opposition. The question is how best in primitive conditions to protect the greater number. Not only may imprisonment, when possible, be rather in the nature of a privilege to the culprit, who is fed without having to make any effort himself, but there may often be no prison available within hundreds of miles. Fines can only be a deterrent where property exists. A case was within my own experience of a porter in a caravan convicted of theft from other porters, remote from all the resources of ordered life. Such a man cannot be expelled from the community. He would perish if left alone, and the load he carries is probably indispensable. Either he must remain unpunished or some deterrent must be enforced. The only available resource is to administer a certain number of lashes and by making an example to inspire the whole body with respect for the law.

Bad news arrived from Egypt. The measures taken to arrest the progress of cholera up the river had failed to stop it at Assouan, and in July we learned that Roddy Owen had died of it in the camp



at Ambigol, where he had organized a body of Arab Scouts. Nor was he the only victim among the British officers. I had sent him up some flannel belts only just before leaving Cairo. He had had dysentery and was no doubt weakened by it, but he had refused to give in, and had overtaxed his strength in patrols covering great distances. The boy who milked his cow became infected, and he committed the grave imprudence of drinking his milk unboiled. So died a good friend and a very gallant soul, a later recruit to that great band of gentlemen adventurers by whom the Empire had been built up and sustained. Those of his contemporaries who still survive no doubt remember him rather as the winner of the Grand National of 1892. To me he will always be the Roddy Owen who planted the flag at Wadelai.

Three of my old East African associates were thus dead within four years of our parting at Mom-basa, and Frankie Rhodes had been condemned to death at Johannesburg, though I had no misgiving that such a sentence would be carried out. Arthur, another member of the Uganda expedition, was not long to survive, and Lloyd Mathews died five years later in 1901. The conquest of Africa exacted a heavy toll.

After a few weeks at home I returned alone to Egypt, leaving my wife behind to pursue her studies in Greek, which, though she only began them after our marriage, she soon carried far enough for us to read the *Odyssey* together. She was also making rapid progress in Arabic. Railway construction

entailed a pause in military operations, and Cromer found that he could after all take a very necessary holiday. The cholera epidemic was on the decline and in Cairo it was almost extinct.

Soon after my return the *Wakt* and another Egyptian newspaper published some violent and gross attacks on the Queen. Possibly the moment of Cromer's departure was deliberately selected. The local Press had for some time past been taking advantage of the unrestrained freedom which our policy had sanctioned to become more and more aggressive. On this occasion, however, I obtained authority to take measures. The two journals were suspended and their editors were arrested. The native courts did their duty and they were condemned to the maximum penalty, a fine and eighteen months' imprisonment. Another editor who had already once been condemned for libel and promptly pardoned by the Khedive was tried on a further libel charge and sentenced to six months' detention. These prosecutions had a salutary effect, and they were in my opinion absolutely necessary. The Khedive was largely responsible for the deplorable character of the Arabic Press. He allowed himself to be approached by low-class journalists and his associates made merry together over the scandals to be published. Those who abused the British, or the Egyptian Ministers who worked with them, received rewards or patronage and believed themselves assured of protection whatever they printed. The Sultan also bestowed money or decorations on writers who attacked the occupying Power.



Such public opinion as could be created in Egypt was being formed by absolutely worthless newspapers, which continually increased in number. With the extension of education more and more Egyptians became able to read, and those who could do so collected groups of listeners who eagerly assimilated mendacious reports of iniquities attributed to us, with the approval and encouragement of their rulers. Under such conditions the great benefits which the occupation had secured for the people, such as the abolition of the courbash and the corvée, and the equitable supply of water, though still appreciated by the older generation, were ignored by the younger men, whose limited capacity for judgment was vitiated by the daily dose of calumny. The French newspapers published in Cairo also co-operated, if in more measured terms, with a constant strain of depreciation. The young Nationalist group, led by Mustapha Kamel, which, had it worked in a right spirit, might have received encouragement and have become a useful element, was from the first exploited by our rivals for their own purposes, and stimulated by fervent encouragement from M. Deloncle and other agitators. As yet the Nationalist party had not become formidable, but in view of the ferment which came to a head in 1919, it is well to remember that the ground was being prepared by the local Press at least twenty-five years earlier.

In August Hamed bin Thwain, the Sultan of Zanzibar, whom I had proclaimed in March, 1893, died with unexpected suddenness. The mortality

of the Muscat Sultans in that tropical island had been phenomenal. He was the third to disappear in the eight years which had elapsed since the death of Barghash in 1888. Once more <sup>1</sup> Seyyid Khaled seized the Palace, but on this occasion with a considerable force behind him and in the absence of an adequate naval force he defied the authority of the Protecting Power. The knowledge that we were about to abolish domestic slavery had evidently rallied many of the Arabs to his side. Sir A. Hardinge was on leave and Mr. Cave was in charge. Lord Salisbury wisely gave him a completely free hand to deal with the emergency. The *St. George* and the *Racoon* arrived on the scene with as little delay as possible, and an ultimatum was delivered to Khaled. As he did not submit the Palace was bombarded. Khaled escaped to the German Consulate. There under the extraterritorial system of the Capitulations he could not be apprehended. The Consulate was some distance from the sea-front and there should have been only two alternatives open to him, either to remain there indefinitely or to be arrested on leaving. But another resource was found to be available. A piece of land adjoining the Consulate and extending to the sea had been offered by the Sultanate to Germany for the purpose of building a hospital, and though no steps had ever been taken to give effect to the object for which the concession had been granted a claim was advanced that the privilege of extraterritoriality covered this strip of land also. Across the corridor Khaled

<sup>1</sup> See previous volume, p. 304.



was enabled to reach a boat and escape in a German ship to Dar-es-Salam. Time's revenges have presumably brought him once more under British jurisdiction.

The following month information reached us of the organized massacre of Armenians in Constantinople, for which the grimmest annals of the Middle Ages hardly afforded a parallel. A certain number of fugitives escaped and some highly skilled craftsmen, for whom we tried to obtain employment, took refuge in Egypt. I found old Ghazi Moukhtar profoundly distressed by the news. He suggested that the Embassies might avail themselves of the opportunity to land detachments and retain them on shore until the Sultan, who would go to great lengths to get rid of them, should agree to any reforms on which the Powers might insist. But there was no prospect of common action among the Powers, and the Sultan was strongly entrenched behind European jealousies. The gift of a pair of horses sent not long afterwards by him to the German Emperor might almost seem to have marked Abdul Hamid's appreciation of the absence of any criticism in Berlin, where *Real-politik* was the order of the day. Public opinion at home was deeply and justly aroused, and Mr. Gladstone once more emerged from private life to denounce the outrage. But circumstances not solely confined to politics had at that time diminished British influence at Constantinople, and it was evident that any isolated action on our part would unite the Continent against us. Lord Rosebery, who in 1896 resigned the

leadership of the Liberal party, made an impressive speech at Edinburgh, and did valuable service in pointing out how inopportune was an agitation which might end in a European war.

Hitherto all had gone mechanically with the Soudan campaign. The Upper Egypt railway had been prolonged from Luxor to Assouan, our poverty and not our will consenting to a change of gauge. Transport difficulties beyond the old frontier had been solved by pushing a railway line ahead with extraordinary rapidity between the second and third cataracts. A group of young engineer officers, among whom the most experienced in railway work was a Canadian, Bimbashi Girouard, had trained a railway battalion of Egyptian conscripts to a high pitch of efficiency. The line as it progressed supplied the material for its own extension, which was carried out at the rate of a kilometer a day.

At the beginning of September, just as the river line had reached a point which would enable the attack on Dongola to be attempted, one of those storms which are comparatively rare in these latitudes burst with devastating violence, and converted the rocky khors or gullies leading to the Nile into rushing torrents. Twelve miles of line were carried away and the railhead was left in the air. It was a heartbreaking and indeed an anxious moment. K., surveying the scene of disaster and the lost material, preserved, externally at any rate, his imperturbable calm, only exacting still more strenuous effort to make good the break. This mishap entailed a fortnight's delay in the advance.



However, on the 23rd of September, the sixtieth anniversary of the Queen's accession, I had the satisfaction of telegraphing home that Dongola had been occupied. Cromer returned from leave that night. During these operations Commander Colville,<sup>1</sup> whose former experience of Nile warfare had indicated him as the right man to command the Nile flotilla, was severely wounded at Hafia and obliged to return home, with the consolation of promotion to post rank. It was then that I heard for the first time and was impressed with the Sirdar's high opinion of a young lieutenant named Beatty, who took charge when Colville was disabled. The Khartoum campaign brought him his third stripe, and twenty years later he was commanding the biggest fleet ever assembled by his country in the greatest of all wars.

The programme originally proposed had now been successfully fulfilled. To us in Egypt it was for many reasons obvious that Dongola could only remain very temporarily a half-way house to Khartoum. For the moment, however, there could be no further movement, the desert railway along the chord of the arc described by the Nile between Wady Halfa and Abou Hamed had first to be constructed. No doubt at the time the scheme of a railway line across waterless sands to a point still in the enemy's possession must have seemed to many an almost fantastic proposition. But K. and his young engineers had no doubt of their ability to surmount every obstacle. The Egyptian army, on which all

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Hon. Sir Stanley Colville, G.C.B.

the work had hitherto fallen, had done well, but the troops did not as yet inspire full confidence in fighting at close quarters. The black regiments were admirable, but there were too few of them. British troops would be needed for the next stage. But for the moment there must be a pause in operations.

Just a month later I reached London only a week before a second boy was born, on the 26th of October. I had only intended to remain at home the few necessary weeks. But my wife was long in recovering, and my mother was also seriously ill, so that we did not return to Cairo until late in December.

During this period of absence I was reminded of old Berlin dissensions by a bombshell exploded in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, Bismarck's organ, which could only be attributed to the old man's irreconcilable rancour, and his desire to show how much wiser the old policy had been than the new. The announcement was made public that up to 1890, when he resigned, a secret treaty had existed between Russia and Germany for benevolent neutrality in case either of the contracting Powers were attacked by a third Power. The disclosure of this treaty of counter-insurance must have given cause for reflection to the other members of the Triple Alliance. An apparent aggressor may so well be in reality the party attacked. Caprivi, who was an honest man, was severely handled in the Hamburg paper for having dropped the agreement. No doubt so long as it remained in force it made a Franco-Russian alliance practically impossible. The official Gazette



at Berlin issued a reprimand for this betrayal of State secrets, which was tantamount to an admission that the facts were as announced.

We travelled back with Sir Alexander Baird and his eldest son, who had just entered the diplomatic service, but had been allowed before joining the Foreign Office to accompany his father whose health was still uncertain. As everything pointed to a heavy increase of work at the Agency, the Secretary of State agreed to his remaining on duty in Egypt. It was one of those happy accidents by which careers are sometimes determined, and he took every advantage of it, eventually transferring his activities to the Public Works Department. He accompanied Sir William Garstin on his expeditions to investigate and deal with the Nile Sudd, and was in due course appointed to the Legation in Abyssinia. He has many adventures to his record, but I doubt whether, even when a wounded lion left its mark upon him, he was ever in a more critical position than on the afternoon when I saw him at the end of a steeplechase at Ghezireh, digging his knees into the neck of a pony without headstall or bridle, which seemed eager to explore the horizon. But he reappeared in due course smiling, and now some twenty-five years afterwards he is himself controlling another Office of Works much nearer Westminster.

Much had happened during our absence. The appeal court of the Mixed Tribunals had, though only by the casting vote of the President, decided against the legality of the credit granted by a

majority vote of the Commissioners of the Debt. The money had therefore to be refunded. Cromer was ready for the emergency, and on the day following the judgment Her Majesty's Government declared their readiness to advance the £500,000, just anticipating a French syndicate which came forward with an offer. All the efforts of the opposition had only resulted in placing a trump in our hands had we decided to use it. But the Government, which had acted with some precipitation in ordering the advance to Dongola, was hesitating where circumstances might have justified action. A suggestion that we should find the money, and that Kitchener should occupy the Soudan for Her Majesty's Government until it were possible for Egypt to undertake the administration, was regarded as too drastic. It would greatly have strengthened our position afterwards, and would have simplified the problem which had to be faced of excluding the application of Capitulations to the Soudan. Cromer, on the other hand, demurred to the proposal of an advance at 5 per cent., of which one and a half would go to form a sinking fund. Eventually the British Government agreed to find the £500,000, together with £240,000 additional for railways and gunboats, at  $2\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. without any sinking fund. They attached to this offer the reservation that they would take no responsibility for any operations beyond Berber. Such a reservation may have served some useful parliamentary purpose at the time, but it was manifestly quite illogical. Supposing Berber to have been taken in a battle in



which the Dervish power of resistance had been broken, with Khartoum separated only by a few days' march and the gunboats ready to go forward, was the advance to cease and were the Dervishes to be allowed to reconsolidate? Such a proposition was untenable. As Egypt had been forced before she was ready into an undertaking the nature of which did not admit of stopping half-way, the suppression of Mahdism once initiated would have to be completed. It was, however, useless to raise the issue prematurely. We had every confidence that when the psychological moment arrived the reservation would have no practical consequences.

The Christmas dinner party at the Agency, an important annual event, was that year a particularly merry one. The Baring boys had arrived for the holidays just in time. After dinner we had designed dumb charades, and one of the subjects for the audience to guess was the *Caisse de la Dette*. For the concluding scene six of us sat at a table looking very serious and Cromer was called upon to impersonate himself. He had to bring in five large Foreign Office despatch bags in succession, each of which was labelled £100,000, and deposit them in front of the six. It was, I think, Elwin Palmer, in the rôle of the French Commissioner, who made a gesture of protest and shook his head. Whereupon Cromer went off and brought back a smaller bag which was labelled "interest." I do not know whether the incorrigible levity of the British ever became known to our critics in Cairo.

As it was now obvious that the Soudan operations

would entail the administration of the basin of the Upper Nile, it was desirable to make use of the interval which must elapse before the advance could be resumed and to secure, if possible, the friendly neutrality of the Abyssinians, who after their recent successes against the Italians had become a power to reckon with in a vast area coterminous with the Soudan. It was accordingly decided in the beginning of 1897 that a mission should be despatched to Menelik, King of Shoa and King of Kings of Ethiopia. I had the good fortune to be selected as Special Envoy. To my great satisfaction my friend Wingate was to accompany me. We were to start as soon as possible after receiving the consent of Menelik to receive a mission.

Up to this time Great Britain had never had any political, or indeed any relations whatever, with the great southern kingdom of Shoa. The mad or bad king Theodore, against whom we had made war in 1867-8, had reigned in Tigré and Amhara in the north, and there many of the chieftains oppressed by his rule had given our expeditionary force countenance and support. With King John of Tigré, who succeeded Theodore, we had twice been in official contact. The first occasion was in 1884, when Admiral Sir William Hewett was sent on a mission to invite him to facilitate the evacuation of the Eastern Soudan by the Egyptian garrisons. Some years afterwards a foreign consular official who had spent most of his life in Red Sea ports told a story of this mission which will perhaps be received with a grain of its own Gallic salt. He



said that King John was much surprised when he first saw the Admiral, who maintained the Nelson tradition and was clean-shaved. Unaccustomed to see men of such an age without hair on the face, he assumed that the Queen had selected as her representative one of those often influential officers who are only found in Eastern households, and he did not consider the choice flattering. The interpreter, however, enlightened him as to the practice of naval tradition. The second occasion was in 1887, when Sir Gerald Portal was instructed to offer our good offices for the conclusion of peace with the Italians. Neither of these missions, both of which had a single definite object in view, penetrated to any great distance from the coast. To reach the capital of Menelik in Shoa, starting from the nearest point on the Somali coast, we should have to traverse five hundred miles of country which few British travellers had ever visited.

The situation in Abyssinia had entirely changed since King John had been killed in battle with the Dervishes at Gallabat in 1889, and the ascendancy had passed from the north to the south. Menelik, who bore the name of the legendary son of Solomon by the Queen of Sheba, and claimed the grandiloquent title of "The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah," had played for a time a waiting game in the issue between the northern princes and Italy. He appeared indeed, when he signed the Treaty of Ucciali with Count Antonelli to have accepted an Italian Protectorate. But when Italian influence had been established in the north, and he realized the

menace to his own independence, Menelik, who after the death of King John found little difficulty in asserting his predominance, maintained that the Italian version of the Treaty did not correctly interpret the meaning of the Amharic text and that the claim to a Protectorate rested on a mistranslation. He therefore repudiated it. There had been little restriction on the supply of arms and ammunition which reached him through Jibuti, and in their own mountains the soldiers of Shoa were a formidable factor. He then made common cause with the northern chiefs, who recognized him as Emperor, and his victory at Adua in 1896 firmly consolidated his power over the whole of Abyssinia.

The ostensible objects which I was to endeavour to secure were thus described in the answer to a question in the House of Commons returned by Curzon, who had now become Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs: "The Mission is sent to assure King Menelik of our friendly intentions, to endeavour to promote amicable political and commercial relations, and to settle certain questions which have arisen between the British Authorities in the Somali Coast Protectorate and the Abyssinian Governor of Harrar." There was, however, more behind the surface than might appear from the official reply.

In the first place the Abyssinians were to us then an unknown quantity, and since the Italian defeat their attitude towards Europeans was reported to have become very aggressive. Rumours had been current that a renewal of more friendly re-



lations with the Soudan, interrupted since the battle of Gallabat, was not impossible. Such rumours were the more credible as we had reason to believe that the Abyssinians suspected us of having supplied Italy with funds for the invasion of their country. French Missions were moreover active in Ethiopia. A commercial treaty had recently been negotiated with France, whose colony of Obok-Jibuti constituted one of the main channels for foreign access. The Governor, M. Lagarde, was reported to have been entrusted with a diplomatic mission to Menelik to discuss bases for a political understanding. We had also been informed that M. Bonvalot had been commissioned to study the problem of entering the Soudan "for commercial purposes." A French expedition was known to be moving from the Upper Ubanghi towards the Nile, and a journey to Abyssinia of Prince Henry of Orleans, though undertaken on his own account, might well have been conceived with the intention of joining hands from the East, a surmise which subsequent revelations proved to have been justified. His published correspondence regarding our action in Egypt did not warrant the presumption that his activities would be to our advantage. Other French expeditions were spoken of as imminent. A Russian free-lance, Léontieff, had recently conducted a small party of Abyssinians to Russia, where religious affinities between the respective churches had been emphasized. France and Russia had had a clear field in Ethiopia, and existing relations did not make it probable that their agents would have reported

favourably to Menelik regarding our intentions in the Nile basin. There was danger that arms and ammunition might be passed on to the enemy. The questions concerning the frontiers of Somaliland and Abyssinia which demanded settlement would become of relatively minor importance if we could succeed in establishing friendly relations. To ensure if possible that there would be no co-operation with Khalifa, and to obtain a more intimate knowledge of internal conditions were the essential objects of the mission. Letters were accordingly despatched through Zeila inviting Menelik to receive us.

The wide area over which he ruled is sometimes called Ethiopia, and more often Abyssinia, the latter being the name under which it is known to us by long tradition. The Abyssinians themselves, however, use only Ethiopia, as the name Abyssinia, derived from an Arabic word meaning "mixed," indicating the variety of races to be found there, has for them a somewhat depreciatory signification.

A week after the public announcement of the mission our second little boy, who had been born in the previous October, manifested symptoms which gave us anxiety. The Egyptian climate is often perilous to very young children. Two days later the little life fluttered out so quietly that the moment of transition was hardly perceptible. This was the first shadow that fell across our married life, made all the darker by the anticipation of my having to leave my wife, who returned some weeks later to England with Lady Cromer.

We had not very much time before us for pre-



paration. In addition to Wingate three officers were designated from home to serve with the expedition: Captain Count Gleichen,<sup>1</sup> of the Intelligence Section in the War Office, Captain Swayne, R.E., who had intimate knowledge of Somaliland, and Lieut. Lord Edward Cecil, of the Grenadier Guards. I also obtained authority to take my brother-in-law, Captain the Hon. Cecil Bingham,<sup>2</sup> of the 1st Life Guards, who was paying us a visit at the time. His knowledge and experience of horses were likely to prove very useful with the mule transport which we should require on reaching the Abyssinian mountains. The Egyptian Government lent us the services of Pinching Bey,<sup>3</sup> the second in command in the Sanitary Department. He had distinguished himself in fighting the recent cholera epidemic, and was also a personal friend whom I had first met at a bump-supper in Oxford days when Balliol rowed second to Pembroke at the head of the river in the Torpid Races. Captain Tristram Speedy, a veteran of Abyssinia, who had actually accompanied the expeditionary force in 1867, was in Cairo, and we were fortunate in securing in him an Englishman who had some knowledge of the Amharic language. He was a great deal older than the most senior of our party, but still vigorous and quite unapprehensive of the anticipated rigours of the march. Finally there was Yuzbashi (Captain) Shahin Effendi George, a Syrian

<sup>1</sup> Major-General Lord Edward Gleichen.

<sup>2</sup> Lieut.-General Hon. Sir Cecil Bingham.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Horace Pinching, K.C.M.G.

officer of the Egyptian Intelligence Section, who spoke perfect English, to act as Arabic secretary. It was desirable to limit numbers owing to the difficulty of transport, and we arranged to take only three European attendants to look after mess and camp equipment. They were my servant Butcher and two Grenadier Guardsmen, Cross and Herbert. At Cairo we also engaged a native cook, who amply justified Wingate's recommendation in manipulating the implements of his craft over the glow of desiccated cow-dung, or in coaxing a fire from damp sticks in the lee of a battered umbrella.

It was an accident, but no doubt a fortunate one, that the stature of the members of the mission was quite exceptional. Wingate, Gleichen, and I were only average specimens. But Speedy with his 6 feet 5 inches belonged to the race of giants, while Cecil, Bingham, Swayne, and Pinching ranged from 6 feet 4 inches to 6 feet 2½ inches. To judge from a number of press cuttings which I received at the time it was the length of the mission in feet and inches which chiefly attracted public attention.

Speedy had not been in Abyssinia for many years, and although after we reached the country he quickly recovered a certain facility of speech he was not up to dealing with written documents. It was therefore imperative to find an efficient interpreter. There were in those days hardly any Englishmen available who had acquired proficiency in the Amharic language, and we understood that Arabic would be of little service to us beyond Harrar. As soon as the organization of the mission was



announced a Shoan who was living in Cairo made himself known and offered his services. His name was Waldo Haimanaut, and he claimed to be a student of Ethiopian literature, and to have acquired his tolerable facility in a peculiar broken English from missionaries. He had a strange elusive personality, and I hesitated long before engaging him for a position of confidence without more knowledge of his antecedents than was obtainable. But there was an obvious advantage in employing a Shoan, whose residence in Egypt moreover would enable him to tell his countrymen something of the work which the British had accomplished there. I was also not unfavourably disposed by the simplicity of the man. He represented that were he to come with us he would have to abandon his "business," which would be a serious consideration. As to the nature of that business, and what it was worth to him, his answers were at first evasive. At length, however, I elicited that it consisted in hunting for concealed treasure, of which he seemed to believe there were many deposits in Egypt. He did not appear as yet to have found any, but he lived on hope. There were no other competitors for the post, and so in spite of some misgivings I engaged him conditionally on Menelik's consent to receive the mission. When provided with a modest outfit he put in a tolerable appearance, and though unpractical and frequently exasperating he proved serviceable and indeed indispensable.

A reply from Menelik cordially welcoming our visit was received in the middle of February, and

we engaged passages by the first available steamer for Aden. There was no time to lose if we were to reach the Shoan capital and return before the great rains broke on the Abyssinian plateau, rendering the tracks practically impassable for some three months. Meanwhile instructions had to be discussed between Cairo and London, arrangements made for transport from Aden to Zeila in Somaliland, and camels to be collected at the latter place to carry us and all our equipment up to the foot of the mountains.

A visit to the capital of Ethiopia presents comparatively few difficulties now that a railway from Jibuti has been completed. But five-and-twenty years ago Shoa was an unknown land, and the organization of a big caravan to cross the inhospitable deserts of Somaliland and scale the successive escarpments by which the lofty tableland of southern Ethiopia is reached demanded serious study and provision for unforeseeable contingencies.

The Cairo bazaars were ransacked for trade goods with which to purchase food and friendly assistance in Somaliland. The question of presents for the King of Kings and the Abyssinian chiefs who would have to be propitiated was the subject of anxious discussion. Swayne, who was in London, had a brilliant inspiration, and obtained from Rowland Ward some skins with the heads set up as in life. There was a polar bear, a black bear, a tiger, and a jaguar. A service of plate was ordered, including salvers, bowls for rice, candlesticks, and a ewer and basin for the ceremonial washing of hands.



Rifles of various design and calibre were sent from England. Jewelled crosses for ecclesiastical dignitaries were not forgotten. For the Empress Taitu an emerald and diamond parure was purchased. Carpets, rugs, and silks were procurable in Egypt. For Somaliland we bought stocks of cotton cloth, handkerchiefs of brilliant design, pocketknives, beads, and all the objects dear to the simple African.

The provisioning of so large a party as ours was destined to be demanded careful calculation. Flour, tea, sugar, and salt, which last commodity is greatly in demand in Abyssinia, together with less bulky supplies, had to be packed in cases of a size and weight to suit alternative kinds of transport, two for a mule and four for a camel, the loads assigned to which should not exceed 160 or 280 lb. respectively. Messrs. Burroughs & Welcome were good enough to offer us an invaluable medicine chest, which contained everything indispensable for such an expedition. Guns, ammunition, camp furniture, uniforms, stationery, rope for loading, and officers' tents made a formidable collection of baggage. Other tents were to be indented for at Aden, and there, last but not least, we were to find money in the form of Maria Theresa dollars, the only form of currency then acceptable in Ethiopia.

As we were to traverse certain areas in the interior of Somaliland where nomad tribes might be encountered whose disposition was uncertain, it was decided that we should take an escort, to be furnished by the Aden troop, recruited from Sikhs and Rajputs,

consisting of a Jemadar and twenty men. For these special rations had to be supplied and, as we found to our consternation on arriving at Zeila whither they were despatched in advance, their tradition entailed a very generous outfit of camp supplies.

At Ismailia, where all our equipment had been assembled for embarkation, we joined the P. & O. steamship *Rome*, in which Captain Swayne had travelled from Marseilles, and proceeded to Aden, where two or three days' delay was inevitable while dollars, tents, and the dhoolies which our medical officer insisted on taking, were assembled and packed. During our stay there we were entertained by the Governor, General Cunningham, with that generous hospitality which is a tradition of the outposts of empire.

On the evening of the 19th of March we re-embarked in the Indian Marine gunboat *Minto*, accompanied by the Resident in Somaliland, Colonel Hayes-Sadler, and on the following morning we found ourselves lying off Zeila, a village of reed huts with a few coral-built houses dating from the Egyptian occupation. The sea was a clean transparent green, the sky an intense blue. Between them westward lay the glowing yellow desert with a faint suggestion of mountain outlines some hundred miles inland. Zeila is an open roadstead, and we were obliged to anchor some two miles out from the shore and land our cases in native boats at a long pier running into shallow water. All was made relatively easy for us by the organizing ability of



the Assistant Resident, Lieutenant Harrington,<sup>1</sup> of the Indian Political Service. He had collected some 190 camels and thirty mules for our journey across Somaliland. There were also five baggage ponies in addition to the ten horses of the Aden troopers, who were to ride and march in turns. A full day was devoted to sorting our stores and gear, which covered an acre, to organizing the caravan, to writing on Somali syces and equipping these and Somali police in the khaki jackets and accoutrements which we had brought from Egypt. Meanwhile we established ourselves in Harrington's new Residency, built by the versatile sapper on a mudflat of the very best materials, according to textbook and rules laid down for construction under quite different conditions. The lower floor intended for offices, instead of being raised on arches, as all such buildings in East Africa should be, was flush with the ground, and the moisture was streaming down the walls.

Harrington's authority over the Somalis, a people by no means easy to handle, impressed us from the first, and we all regretted that he was not to accompany the expedition. He had had a somewhat remarkable career. After an education at Stonyhurst, where he had also taken the University course, financial complications and a difference of opinion with his guardian had led him to enlist in the Dublin Fusiliers. He went to India and in a very short time became a sergeant. Working hard under the difficult conditions of life in the sergeant's

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Sir John Lane Harrington, K.C.M.G.

mess, he had no sooner obtained a commission, as with his antecedents and ability he was bound to do, than he succeeded in passing the examination for the Indian Political Service. After some years' employment at Residences in native states he found himself Assistant Political Officer at Zeila. But for the arrival of the Special Mission he might well have been left on that low-lying shore until his constitution had been completely undermined by the prevalent fever. As it was, before the year was out he became the first permanent British Representative in Abyssinia, where he ably dealt with a difficult situation over a number of years.

Special duties had now to be assigned. Wingate, besides keeping the official journals, was to act as Treasurer with Shahin Effendi to assist him. Swayne, whose former experience in Somaliland indicated him as chief Shikari, was Transport Officer and hierophant of the theodolite. Gleichen, who had discovered a second moderate interpreter at Aden, was Intelligence and Surveying Officer charged with the selection of camps and provision of water. Pinching, in addition to looking after our health, which fortunately gave him little trouble, undertook the duties of Mess President with full powers over the issue or withholding of our limited provision of luxuries. Bingham had charge of the native commissariat and became our honorary "vet." Cecil was entrusted with the very important duties of rear-guard officer and the issue of blankets and of rope for loading. I begged Speedy, who was older and less robust, to keep himself for Abyssinia where



he would become responsible for local supplies. Meanwhile, as he claimed to be something of a taxidermist, he was hailed as naturalist to the expedition.

Ever since I had left Zanzibar a haunting nostalgia for tropical Africa had possessed me, and though I could not ignore the great difficulties which lay before us and the heavy responsibilities of the mission with which I had been entrusted, I was in the highest of spirits at the prospect of starting once more on the path of adventure into a world unknown.

## CHAPTER IV

1897

On the road to Shoa. The Somali desert. Italian prisoners at Biya Kaboba. Gildessa to Harrar. Ras Makonnen. To Church with the Ras. Difficulty of securing transport. News of M. Lagarde and Prince Henry of Orleans. Beauty of the Highlands. Episodes of a night march. The valley of the Hawash. The approach to Addis Abbaba. M. Ilg. The capital. Our official reception by the Emperor Menelik. Prince Henry as a correspondent and the French Press. The Coptic Bishop and the Lord Chief Justice. The Empress Taitu. Lunch at the Gêbi. Léontieff. Sources of information.

Twenty-four hours of very hard work sufficed to establish some order in our little army. One of the first obligations was sensibly to reduce the equipment of the Aden escort which, as landed at Zeila, would have required fifty camels for its transport. Loading up began at daybreak on the morning after our arrival. By 10.30 the last camels were away and then, bidding farewell to Hayes-Sadler and Harrington who accompanied us for a short distance, we marched some eight miles over sandy country with desert growth of dwarf mimosa and the large-leafed Dead Sea apple to the wells of Warabod, where crowds of spear-bearing Somalis of the White Esa tribe were watering sheep and goats from half a dozen shallow pits. Thence



after a brief halt we rode on five more miles to a camping ground selected because it offered good pasture for the camels. They were turned loose to graze while their owners built themselves shelters for the night with the fleeces used for pack-saddles.

It is hardly an exaggeration to describe our caravan as a little army. In addition to the European or Egyptian officers and their personal attendants with two interpreters, there were 21 men of the Aden troop with 9 camp followers: 12 police, five of them Soudanese, and the rest Somali; 8 servants, Egyptian, Hindu, or Somali; 15 syces for the mules with their headman, these mostly of the Gadabursi tribe; 12 dhooly bearers; 2 sweepers; and 20 coolies of the Esa Somali tribe, making a total of 115 for whom food and water had to be provided. In addition to these there were 80 camel drivers who carried their own rations. The animals included 15 horses or ponies, 30 riding mules, and 1 donkey. At the start there were also 5 oxen and 12 sheep for rations. The camels numbered 191, including a trotting dromedary which Gleichen had acquired. Twenty-five of these carried 50 water casks, and twelve more were loaded with presents and bullion. The mobilization and feeding of such numbers demanded considerable organizing ability. Arrangements were worked out on the march. The seventeen tents were pitched in a formation which once adopted was maintained throughout the journey. When once we had settled down the camp was roused by gunshot at 5 a.m., and by 6.30 we had

breakfasted, struck camp, loaded up, and started again.

Between Warabod and the nearest point where wells could be dug we had to traverse 40 miles of absolutely waterless desert. This stretch we were enabled to negotiate owing to the prevision of Harrington who had sent forty-five barrels of water ahead of us to a half-way station. The first stage of this march in scorching heat was very trying, as we were not yet in training. A touch of fever gave me some misgiving lest my old enemy, malaria, might once more incapacitate me. But it was only due to sun and exhaustion, and as an old African I fared better than some of the novices, who had rolled up their shirt-sleeves and opened their collars, with the result that the skin peeled in rolls off the exposed chest and forearms, not to mention nose and neck. During the second stage we met a large contingent of Italian prisoners returning from Abyssinia to the coast in charge of two officers. The Italian Red Cross had established relief stations at Harrar and Biya Kaboba, and Harrington was sending out a further supply of water for their use. They had been marching for forty days, and were in high spirits at nearing their journey's end after a long detention. Beyond our third camp at Hensa, where water was plentiful, and where we shot a number of sandgrouse, the road began to rise slightly through rocky country, but the subsequent days' stages were generally monotonous till we reached the hundred and first mile at Biya Kaboba.

The itinerary of our caravan has been so amply



described by Lord Edward Gleichen in a book<sup>1</sup> enlivened with his own excellent sketches that I do not propose to extract similar details from the diary, which I endeavoured to keep as complete as possible by the light of a single candle in my tent before turning in for the night. After the first three days we did not dread long marches, especially as clouds now began to veil the cruel African sun. Therefore finding the wells at an intended camping ground dry we saved a day and pushed on 26 miles to Biya Kaboba. This enabled us to devote twenty-four hours to rest and re-organization, which was the more necessary as the camel drivers were protesting against the length of our marches. They considered even 20 miles a day excessive, and the camel not less than his driver has a very stubborn opinion as to the amount of work which may be demanded of him.

At Biya Kaboba—the Big Water—we found on the summit of a round hill a sort of blockhouse with a small and ragged garrison. It was an Abyssinian outpost, a great deal farther east than it should have been according to our interpretation of the frontier. Here we also found the Italian Red Cross station and stores of Captain Bracco, who kindly sent us some flasks of Chianti, which were most welcome in the wilderness as our “cellar” had been reduced to very modest dimensions. He spoke very warmly of Harrington’s assistance at Zeila in repatriating his countrymen. There was in his camp an unfortunate soldier who

<sup>1</sup> *With the Mission to Menelik*. Edward Arnold, 1898.

had been left behind by the last company that had marched through. An abscess in the mouth behind a tooth was evidently poisoning his whole system, and his face was swollen and distorted beyond recognition. Pinching was afraid that things had gone too far and that it would not be possible to save him. However, he operated with success, and I was glad to hear afterwards that the man recovered completely.

We learned from Captain Bracco that Prince Henry of Orleans, marching from Jibuti, had preceded us by about a fortnight. Here another batch of Italian prisoners came in. I had a good deal of conversation with an officer of artillery. He told me their sufferings after the battle of Adua had been terrible. They had to walk some 600 miles. He had no boots and nothing left him but a shirt and a pair of trousers. As there was hardly any food available but a handful of grain or beans from time to time, he sold his shirt for a chicken. The women treated them with brutality. The men, especially the older ones, were kindlier, but they had little to give them. The prisoners who were with Menelik himself were well cared for. He also spoke in the highest terms of Ras Makunnen, the Governor of Harrar, who had saved the lives of many Italians, and recently on their march down had done all that was in his power to facilitate their journey.

The same officer gave me some interesting details of the battle itself. A pretended deserter had informed Baratieri that he had only a small body



of Abyssinians in front of him, the main body being several days' march distant. Afterwards when in Addis Abbaba he had learned that this informer had been sent by Menelik to lead them astray. Baratieri, hoping to demoralise the rest by inflicting a crushing defeat on a smaller force, fell into the trap. The Italian artillery did great execution and some twelve thousand Abyssinians were put out of action. A factor which affected the situation for the Italians most unfortunately was that their native levies had no uniform, and bore no distinguishing mark except their red caps, which they threw off in the heat of the fight. The artillery could not distinguish friends from foes, and at a critical moment, mistaking the Abyssinians for their own people, had ceased firing and so allowed them to advance right up to the guns.

Beyond Biya Kaboba the aspect of the country improved. There was abundance of the little mouse deer, or dikdik, the smallest of the species, and a great number of ground squirrels ; there were hyenas, jackals, a few hares, and a great variety of beautiful birds. Antelope, bustard, guinea-fowl and francolin were encountered more rarely. Though we could only occasionally during a halt diverge from the line of march in pursuit of game, we managed to keep the mess supplied with more or less palatable meat, and sheep were generally obtainable from the Somali herdsmen.

In reply to a letter sent on to Harrar I received a polite communication from Ras Makunnen, informing me that mules were scarce, but that he

was doing his best to collect some. Our camel men would not go beyond Gildessa, the Abyssinian customs station at the foot of the higher hills, which 40 miles of steep ascent separated from Harrar. Swayne consequently rode on ahead of the caravan to make such arrangements as might be possible. Our camps were visited by sections of the black and the white Esa Somalies, who performed their pantomimic war dances and were rewarded with presents from our stock of trade goods. From these tribesmen we encountered nothing but friendliness.

On the tenth day after leaving Zeila we reached Gildessa, where we were saluted by the Governor and a heterogeneous guard of honour, who fired three rounds of ball cartridge as a salute. Here we first came across the typical round Abyssinian house with walls of mud or rubble, surmounted by a high-pitched conical roof of straw thatch. The village itself, containing some 2,000 inhabitants, had little attraction, but the country round, rich in springs and running water, with an opulent vegetation, offered a grateful change after the monotonous Somali plain. The bird life surpassed anything I had ever seen in brilliancy and beauty of plumage. Not less abundant were the beetles and insects, in which Ned Cecil took a special interest.

Swayne's efforts had been crowned with unexpected success, and by the following morning the Governor had produced 300 donkeys and 18 hill camels. The donkeys were small and amorous,



more disposed to occupy themselves with their private affairs than with ours, so that loading presented a difficult problem. Some repacking was necessary, and we left a deposit of stores in the Governor's charge for the return journey across Somaliland. The camels were owned by Gallas, who form the principal part of the population. But the owners of the donkeys, which do most of the carrying between Gildessa and Harrar, are a race apart with a language of their own. They call themselves R'hotta. They are placid, amiable, physically well developed and very good looking.

The loading of our new transport occupied two and a half hours and entailed a deplorable consumption of rope. Then we began to climb through a gorge with a wide torrent bed, leading to a succession of undulating hills. The air grew lighter as we mounted and our spirits rose in proportion. About 50 yards from our path a great baboon with a mane like a lion was walking along quite unconcerned. Behind him followed a group of smaller ones, presumably his wives, and a number of little fellows brought up the rear. They disappeared over the hills in the direction of the river. But presently we saw them recross the track again about a hundred yards behind us. These migratory tribes or families of monkeys do great damage to the plantations of the Galla villagers. Soon afterwards we encountered a hailstorm of locusts. As we climbed higher and higher up the first step in the Abyssinian mountain system we came to the region of the candelabra euphorbia, which is familiar in all descriptions of

the country, and the fig sycamore. On either side high cliffs of rock or steep green slopes shut in a pass at the head of which our camp was pitched near a village called Belawe, on a stretch of turf above the millet fields. Here both thermometer and aneroid agreed in marking 5,800 feet. The ground had been gradually rising ever since we left the sea.

The following morning we recommenced the ascent through groves of wild olive, wild jasmine and heliotrope, with a wonderful view looking backwards over successive ridges to the foothills, and the Somali plain. Then a fantastic procession met us, the escort sent by Ras Makunnen, headed by a venerable officer of the high rank of Kanyasmach,<sup>1</sup> wearing a purple silk shirt and crimson cloak with a silver-mounted shield hanging from the saddle. He was followed by four horn-blowers blowing on long wooden trumpets or shawms, and various officers in coloured cloaks with silk handkerchiefs round their heads, or more rarely the mane of a lion, the trophy of the slayer. Behind marched a body of soldiers wearing the white *tobe*, which is the universal dress of the Abyssinian. This large oblong sheet with its crimson border at one end only, draped over the shoulder, seems the exact counterpart, and is perhaps a survival of the old Roman toga. After a ball-cartridge salute and exchanges of compliments we learned that Ras Makunnen would ride out to meet us on the following morning, and so we pressed on to a camping ground some ten miles east of Harrar. Here we found awaiting us an offering of bread and

<sup>1</sup> Commander of the Right Wing.



sheep and a supply of the national drink, known as tej, a kind of hydromel made from fermented hops and honey. Speedy, who during his former sojourn in the country had acquired the taste, was in his element surrounded by the earthenware vessels, known as *gombos*, in which it is kept. I drank my measure of tej, when deference to the laws of hospitality required it, but never appreciated it greatly, and not unfrequently found the obligation difficult to fulfil. Tej varies very much in quality according to locality and to the care with which it is prepared. Makunnen, who was far ahead of most of his countrymen in refinement and sensibility, offered us a really agreeable clarified kind, rather resembling, as Gleichen aptly suggested, sweet Madeira in taste. But often the beverage pressed upon us was a sea-green viscous liquid in which dead wasps or bees and other extras floated unpleasantly. Nor did it become more appetising when your host strained it through the shirt which he was wearing. We rose early after a very chilly night, and put on ceremonial uniform. A beautiful mule had been sent me by the Ras, which I was quite unable to mount until I discovered that the Abyssinians, owing to their custom of wearing their curved swords on the right, always mount horses or mules from the off side. I never rode an animal with more perfect action. She carried me all the way to Addis Abbaba and back again to the coast, some 800 miles, before we reluctantly parted company.

Leaving the camp to break up and follow later we rode off with the ten mounted sowars of the

Aden troop and an Abyssinian escort through a pleasant land rich with the dark green of coffee plantations. The berry is indigenous in Ethiopia and derives its name from the region of Kafa. We were told that a great part of the produce found its way to Arabia, to be reshipped as Mocha coffee. After about two hours' ride we met the Ras and dismounted to greet him. He then said he would precede us to the city to prepare for our reception, and cantered off while we followed more slowly towards the minarets and crenelated walls of an old Arab town, on which we looked down from the next ridge. It stands on rising ground in an amphitheatre of hills.

All the population were in the narrow streets to watch our arrival, and a guard of honour was drawn up in front of Makunnen's house. Here he received us and offered us quarters. But as our caravan was much too large to be accommodated within the walls we thought it better to camp at a reasonable distance from the town. The Ras, whose household was in charge of an Armenian and his wife, provided an excellent luncheon, in which he himself, being a strict observer of Lent, was unable to take part on a Friday. We settled down about half a mile beyond the gates, and in the afternoon paid a visit to the genial officers of the Italian Red Cross, who once more were so good as to send us a present of wine. A last and final consignment of 200 prisoners under General Albertone was due to arrive on the day we left Harrar. Our mess tent was prepared for the reception of the Ras, who



called early the next morning, and we drank the health of our respective sovereigns in the champagne, over which our mess-president, having in mind its medicinal importance, kept a rigorous guard. We then returned his visit, taking with us the Queen's present.

Ras Makunnen, the nephew of Menelik, was regarded as the heir presumptive to his uncle, who had only two daughters. He had been governor of Harrar for some ten years, ever since the Shoans took it and deposed the independent Emir established there after the Egyptian evacuation in 1882. He impressed us immediately as a considerable personality. Rather small in stature, with delicate hands, his brown features were pleasing and his expression alert and intelligent. His manner was quiet, cordial, and dignified. During the week which circumstances compelled us to spend in his town, and the second week through which we remained there on our return journey, I saw him continually, and felt that terms of real friendship had been established. Though I was never able in after years, when the railway to Abyssinia had been opened, to take advantage of his warm invitation to return and stay with him on his country estate, he kept me in kindly memory and, when sent to England to represent Menelik at the coronation of King Edward, he paid a long visit to my mother in London, and gratified her by friendly references to her son. His own son, the present Regent of Abyssinia, appears to be following in the footsteps of his enlightened father.

The burning question of transport had not been solved. We had hoped to find 300 mules awaiting us. But the only definite assurance we could obtain was the promise of the loan of some fifty from Makunnen himself. As hiring promised to be very costly we decided to buy, and orders were issued that all available animals were to be brought in. A Sunday intervened, and as Abyssinia is strictly Sabbatarian, no business could be done. So we went to church with Makunnen. Though unable to follow the ritual, much of which is conducted in the square enclosed holy precinct in the centre of the circular edifice, which corresponds to the screened sacrarium in the Coptic or Orthodox churches, we did all that could be expected of us and duly kissed the cross presented by the chief officiating priest. I was greatly interested in the paintings on the panels of the altar enclosure, which corresponds in height to the wall of the circular church, but does not extend up into the conical roof. Religious art, uniform throughout Abyssinia, is Byzantine in character. The colouring is crude, and the conception of biblical scenes is not perhaps more elementary than that of other primitive Christian pictures. Certain characteristics, however, deserve mention. The archers who shoot at St. Sebastian crouch in an almost kneeling position, as bowmen are represented when taking aim in classic sculpture. The virtuous and holy show the full face to the observer, and the wicked as a rule the profile. The Virgin and saints are fair-skinned, and all faces have a much lighter complexion than that which



prevails at any rate among the population of Shoa.

Missionaries are not encouraged in Ethiopia. There was, however, a Roman Catholic mission at Harrar, which did a certain amount of unsectarian and educational work. Its head, Monseigneur Thaurin, with whom we exchanged visits, a charming grey-bearded type of the regular, had lived twenty years in the country, and he furnished us with much information. Apart from the representatives of authority and some soldiers, there were few Abyssinians in Harrar. In the bazaar we found Indians, and a fair number of Armenians and Greeks. We procured specimens of the goods most in demand, and collected notes for a commercial report. Otherwise Monday was disappointing as only fourteen mules were secured. On Tuesday we did better. The average price should have been about thirty dollars, but the owners made our need their opportunity. Once he had acquired the numerals Pinching proved an adept in bargaining. Our judge of horseflesh, Bingham, had to reduce his standards, and sixty in all were accepted. We dined with Makunnen, who promised better results for the morrow, but Wednesday only produced fifty. Though we reduced equipment by leaving a further depôt of stores at Harrar, and sifted out more unnecessary material from the gear of the Aden troop, our transport was still below strength, and we were very short of pack saddles. The mules provided by the Ras, which were of excellent quality, were now loaded and sent

on to the first camp on the road. With the assistance of the officer selected to accompany us to Addis Abbaba a fair complement of mule-drivers was secured, and early on Thursday morning Gleichen got away with thirty men and fifty of the best mules, carrying our tents. It was a black-letter day for the rest of us. The remaining animals were all pretty wild, and some of them had probably never carried loads before. Heels were flying in every direction, loads were bucked off, runaways were disappearing over the horizon, and every one was shouting and cursing in Arabic, Amharic, Somali, or English.

Then followed the tragedy of the dhoolies. They had with great difficulty been carried up the steep ascent by Gadabursi porters. Pinching had now had them rigged with shafts for mules by Harrari carpenters. At the last moment we had bought twelve more animals and loaded them with the remainder of our indispensable property. Three mules, one of them a crock, and an old horse were left for the dhoolies. We persuaded our reluctant medical officer to leave one behind. Then the two able-bodied mules were with difficulty coaxed into the shafts of the other, which was filled with melons and cucumbers, the parting gift of the Ras. The leader looked back over his shoulder at the strange machine to which he was attached, and the mule behind backed away from it. The next thing I saw was dhooly and mules whirling round and round down the hill-side like a catherine-wheel, detached from its axle with flying vegetables for



sparks. The wreck collapsed somewhere in the valley, where the frightened animals were recovered. Dhoolies were written off. But we had only seven drivers left for some thirty refractory mules, several of which with their loads were already making for the open country.

The Ras had insisted on accompanying us over a portion of the road. But the hours passed and he did not come. We had been working hard for eight hours in the sun, and had a march of some ten miles before us. So Wingate and I rode off to the town to find him. We met him at the gate and explained our difficulties. He undertook to provide fourteen more drivers and promised to send on everything after us. But when he reached the camping-ground there was still such confusion prevailing with bolting mules and falling loads that I begged him to return and leave us to organise the tail of our scattering caravan. Always courtesy itself he sent out officers to round up the fugitives. So we took our leave and at length after five o'clock in the afternoon got away fairly worn out with the fatigues of a vexatious day. After riding through a very pleasant land for about two hours we found our tents pitched on a grassy slope above Lake Haramaya, the haunt of innumerable coot, duck and wild goose.

At no great distance from our camp was that of two French travellers with whom we forgathered, the Prince de Lucinge and Comte Le Gonidec. They had accompanied Prince Henry of Orleans as far as Harrar, but being only intent on sport had parted

company with him some weeks earlier, when he had hurried on alone to Addis Abbaba in pursuit of other game. From them we ascertained that M. Lagarde had left Harrar for the capital some two months before. It was, therefore, doubtful whether he would still be there when we arrived. M. Bonvalot, with some mysterious mission to fulfil, was also some weeks ahead of us.

In a day or two our capable staff succeeded in reducing the transport to order with or without the assistance of our Abyssinian officer and guide, Ito Ambascié, who met every demand with a salaam and the invariable answer "Ishi," which signifies immediate and zealous compliance, not necessarily translated into action. Long association with Ambascié in the daily routine of camp life finally induced a friendly feeling towards a well-intentioned but not very efficient mentor. We were, however, never quite able to forgive him for a habit, which is common to most Abyssinians of his class, of covering his crisp hair with rancid and evil-smelling butter, which was prevented from running down into the eyes by a rag tied round the forehead. This malodorous hairdressing is accounted a lesser affliction than the parasitic alternative against which it serves as a prophylactic. Speedy now took over from him the duty of distributing rations among our heterogeneous followers, and carried it out with a strict impartiality which had been compromised by the predilection of Ambascié for his own people. So long as we remained in Makunnen's province the headmen of the districts in which our



camps were pitched brought us ample provision of food. This was in accordance with the custom of the country, where on the main lines of communication the inhabitants are exempt from taxation on condition that rations are furnished to travellers.

A re-examination of my diaries and photographs vividly brings back to me the charm and beauty of the scenery through which by successive steps we mounted to an altitude of 8,000 feet. The country was well watered, grass-land and forest alternating. The wild olive was abundant, and over our heads through the best part of one day's march towered the giant Abyssinian zigbah tree, used according to a local tradition, which reveals complete disregard for problems of transport, to build Solomon's temple. Sugar-cane, upwards of 10 feet in length and 9 inches in circumference, was brought into camp. Honeysuckle, dogrose, syringa, iris, tiger-lily, and many varieties of fern abounded. The day temperature was hot, but not excessively so, and at night the mercury often sank under 40, and was recorded as low as 34. For such details, however, I must refer once more to Gleichen's excellent book.

Reports received from Abyssinians who had recently left Addis Abbaba led us to anticipate that we should meet M. Lagarde descending towards the coast in the beautiful Burka valley. We prepared a modest banquet in our camp for his reception, and induced the mess-president to unpack some bottles of champagne. His baggage caravan arrived, but Lagarde himself, we were informed,

had made a forced march to a cross-road, and had there turned aside under pretext of paying a visit to the chief of the district. We concluded that he did not wish to meet us. The inexorable Pinching re-packed the champagne.

After spending another week in crossing the delectable plateau through scenery of constantly varying charm we began to descend into the province or region of Chercher towards the central tropical valley of the Hawash river, a region destitute of all supplies which we counted on crossing by rapid marches. By this time our transport was in a somewhat critical condition. Horrible sores had developed on the backs of the mules, which were now quite tame and subdued, while a considerable number had broken down and were unfit to carry loads at all. Stores for the return journey were again left with the headmen of villages. But additional transport was almost unprocurable, and the problem of loading up the indispensable cases became daily more difficult.

The Governor of Kunni, Fitaaurari<sup>1</sup> Asfau, a pleasant young chieftain who at the age of twenty-two had succeeded his father, killed at the battle of Adua, promised us everything, but could only furnish very little. He was, however, able to secure for us twenty Galla camels, which, though of a very different type from the strong weight-carriers of the Somali plain, would help us across the Hawash valley. A short march early on the 19th of April

<sup>1</sup> Literally a rhinoceros horn, metaphorically the leader of the advance-guard.



took us to Laga Hardim across the frontier of Makunnen's province, the passage from which into Shoa was not accomplished without some difficulty owing to an objection raised by the frontier authority to the presence of Harrari soldiers. But Gleichen, whose whisky flask was capacious and fortunately full, tactfully pacified the excited officer. At Laga Hardim we rested all day and loaded up again at nightfall for a moonlight march of five-and-twenty miles to the Hawash river. Bingham became very popular, having succeeded in annexing a small supply of onions, which after our long abstention from fresh vegetables helped to make more palatable the slice of cold sheep saved from the night before for luncheon on the road, which developed in our breast pockets a magnificent iridescence, and was known as "rainbow mutton."

Next to the purgatorial day of our departure from Harrar the hardest of our experiences was probably that night march to the Hawash. We got away about 11 p.m., some two hours after the moon had risen, and climbed a steep ascent. Near the crest of the pass leading to the great valley, where the path wound narrowly round the side of a sheer cliff, one of the Galla camels stumbled and fell over the edge into the darkness. It was laden with silver plate, one of the most important presents to be conveyed to Menelik. Our rope was far behind with the rear-guard. The Aden troopers who were escorting the bullion knotted their long pugries together, and with this improvised rope Swayne, who was in front, descended the cliff into

the wilderness of thorn and bush below. But he could find nothing. When I reached the spot I found a note which he had left saying that he had ridden on to reorganise the transport, but would shortly return. Cecil and Ambascié with two Abyssinian soldiers then essayed the descent perilous. Two shots rang out through the night, and a bullet whizzed unpleasantly near my head. Ambascié re-appearing described how two lions were preparing to negotiate the dead camel when he had fired to scare them away. This I have no doubt was an outrageous invention. But he had succeeded in retrieving one or two parcels. Swayne returned in due course and went down the cliff once more, while the rest of the caravan pressed on through the night. With patience and daylight to assist him our energetic transport officer succeeded in recovering everything, and happily the stout cases containing the silver had resisted the shock of the fall.

Morning and a pleasant little stream running under great mimosas on a level stretch tempted us sorely to halt and camp after twenty miles of rough riding and a difficult descent in the dark, for it promised to be tropically hot in the wide valley below. But we resisted. Here we encountered some huge snakes the species of which our naturalist was unable to identify. The Hawash, a sight of which we anticipated in every depression, seemed as elusive as a mirage, and no indication of a river-bed appeared in the scorched brown grass region which stretched eastward for miles to the foot of the lofty volcanic range of Fantalle on the farther



side. At last quite suddenly, after some five miles of weary going over coarse dry tufted grass, we found ourselves on the edge of a deep ravine, perhaps here nearly half a mile in width, at the bottom of which some hundreds of feet below us ran the river. A few miles away where the ravine narrows there is an iron bridge, constructed in 1894 by French engineers with material brought with infinite difficulty from Jibuti. But its single layer of plank flooring is only strong enough for light traffic, and, to spare strain as much as possible, it is only used in the rainy season when the river is in flood. During the rest of the year it is kept closed by a stout thorn zareeba. We had to ford the stream, which was some hundreds of yards wide and running strong with water up to the girths of the mules. Happily all crossed in safety, though it was not till after midday that the last stragglers of the caravan and Swayne with his rescue party came into the camp which Gleichen had prepared for us on the farther side of the ravine. It is strange that a river of such dimensions as the Hawash never finds the sea, but disappears in the desert lands to the north-east.

The thermometer registered 107 in the shade. The coarse yellow grass and a few dwarf mimosas offered poor forage for our exhausted animals. But we were all tired out after our long night march, and it was necessary to make a halt in this uninviting sun-bleached spot. So we decided on another nocturnal march after one long night and a short day in camp. We had anticipated some big-game shooting in the plain, where zebra, elephant

and lion were reported to be abundant a day's march to the right or left of the track. But many caravans had recently been passing up and down, and we could not afford time to deviate far from the track. On our return journey we sighted ostriches there, and only missed securing some by an unlucky manœuvre. Hyenas and jackals were always with us, and there were game birds and dik-dik to vary the monotony of tinned rations. A mail sent after us from the coast and newspapers reached us as a pleasant surprise. The messenger, who was going on to Addis Abbaba, took a letter for Menelik, in which I announced to him the approximate date of our arrival. In the afternoon we filled our water tins and bottles and started on another march of 28 miles.

The Gallas were burning the dry grass in the plain with a view to future cultivation, and as night fell the travelling blaze diffused an eerie light. The wind, which luckily shifted at an opportune moment, had brought the conflagration unpleasantly near our line of march. In two or three hours we reached the western edge of the plain and began to ascend the lower slopes of Fantalle, which were difficult to negotiate until the waning moon appeared. At daybreak camp was pitched near a pleasant river with wooded banks, but though the burning Hawash valley was behind us the thermometer still marked 110 in our tents.

During the next three or four days we mounted step by step towards the high plateau of Shoa through cultivated areas with many villages, and



then across a region of rolling prairie where no fuel but desiccated cow-dung was obtainable, and at last we found ourselves within a few hours' march of Addis Abbaba.

Uncertain whether my former letter had ever reached its destination I sent a second one to Menelik to announce our arrival. The result was a visit from M. Ilg, the Emperor's Swiss adviser and counsellor of State, who rode out to meet us in a frock coat. My two letters had arrived simultaneously on the morning of that day, and we had travelled nearly as fast as the postal messenger. Menelik regretted that the next day he had to attend a great religious festival and could not therefore receive us with due form, but if we cared to proceed at once we should find quarters in the compound of the now extinct *Compagnie Franco-Africaine*, recently occupied by Lagarde, and the ceremonial reception could take place on the following morning. We welcomed this suggestion and the prospect of settling down to unpack and refit, as we had now been on the road for more than five weeks.

No one appeared to meet us on the morrow as we approached what looked from a certain distance like a vast camp with numbers of straw- or grass-roofed huts standing in hedged compounds. But our Abyssinians knew the quarters assigned to us, where we found tents still in process of erection, from which it became clear that we had arrived earlier than had been anticipated. Before long, however, M. Ilg arrived with the Gerasmach Joseph,

the chief interpreter, an intelligent and agreeable Shoan who had been to Europe and could speak French. If our reception had seemed inadequate the amplest amends were offered, and soon afterwards a procession arrived from the royal enclosure bringing food of all kinds and abundance of fresh vegetables.

Our baggage mules, which were in a deplorable condition from long marches, short commons, and back-sores, were distributed among the surrounding villages, where forage was abundant, and we only retained our riding mules and the horses within the compound. The latter contained a big circular hut some 35 feet in diameter which was to serve for our mess. A smaller two-roomed house was occupied by Wingate and myself, while the rest of the party remained in their tents.

Addis Abbaba lies 8,000 feet above sea-level in an undulating plain, covered with coarse grass and intersected by small gullies and ravines, under the Entotto mountains, which rise some 1,500 feet above the town to the north. Other more distant ranges to the south, south-east and west form a ring around the prairie plateau, which reminded me not a little of the Roman Campagna with its rolling expanse of grass bounded by the Alban, the Sabine and the Ciminian hills. The Shoan capital has been successively moved from Ankober to Entotto and from Entotto to its present site, as the neighbouring forests were cut down and the timber supplies exhausted. The ever-increasing distance which separates the present settlement from



the forests under Mt. Managasha will no doubt eventually entail another move. In the centre of an agglomeration of compounds distributed over a very wide area, on a slight elevation dominating the plain, is the royal enclosure known as the Gébi, and round it are grouped the establishments of the chief officers of the country. The capital gives the impression of an ancient semi-civilisation islanded in the midst of savage Africa.

Our official reception took place on the following day. Very early in the morning there arrived in camp a magnificently accoutred mule of stately proportions for me to ride. An escort of several thousand soldiers in clean white tobes, accompanied by musicians and marshalled by officers in brilliantly coloured silk shirts, followed in charge of the Lord Chief Justice, whose official title literally rendered into English is the "Breath of the King." The Breath was a delightful old gentleman of whom I subsequently saw a good deal. Over a purple silk shirt and white trousers he wore a black cloak, and his head was overshadowed by an enormous black felt hat. We were all in full dress, and evidently the effect produced on the spectators by Cecil as a Grenadier, and Bingham with the cuirass and helmet of the 1st Life Guards, was profound. We took with us the Jemadar and eight sowars of the Aden troop in their effective Indian uniform. The scene was brilliant under a cloudless sky. A mile or two separated our quarters from the palace, which was surrounded by a high stockade. As we approached we could hear the weird rhythmic roll of

the Emperor's famous drums, and entering the gate we saw the negro drummers in striped red-and-white shirts with high-crowned red caps sitting on the ground beside their big kettledrums. The audience-hall was surrounded by troops. Some ten thousand had been summoned to the capital for the occasion.

We were introduced into a big oblong reception-chamber, constructed like all Abyssinian houses of rubble with a remarkable thatched roof of very wide span. At the far end the Emperor was sitting under a canopy in Turkish fashion, on a divan raised upon a dais. He wore a purple silk cloak, on which were conspicuous the stars of the Legion of Honour and of the order of St. Catherine of Russia.

Menelik, whose swarthy pit-marked face was full of character and quiet power, smiled very cordially as he held out his hand, studying my features with steady eyes while the mission took their seats on a row of chairs disposed in front of the divan. Through Gerasmach Joseph, who spoke in French, he bade us welcome, and then the guns without thundered a salute, in acknowledgment of which we rose to our feet. Menelik then begged us once more to be seated, and I addressed him in English, which was rendered into Amharic, sentence by sentence, by Waldo Haimanaut. I told him that the Queen had taken the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of her auspicious reign to despatch a special mission to His Majesty, bringing a message of friendship, a solemn assurance of peaceful intentions, and the expression of a desire to maintain cordial relations between our respective countries.



Then, after delivering the Queen's letter with another from the Khedive and a third from the Coptic Patriarch in Egypt, I presented all the members of the mission. Menelik enquired after the health of the Queen and asked intelligent questions regarding affairs in Europe.

During these proceedings I had been able to take in certain details of the picturesque scene. There were some fifteen Europeans present standing to the right of the divan. These included Prince Henry of Orleans, with Vicomte de Poncins and M. Mourichon, M. Bonvalot, Colonel Léontieff with some Cossack non-commissioned officers, and of course M. Ilg. On the left were massed the Princes, Rases, and principal officers at the time in Addis Abbaba, gorgeously costumed. Seated on the ground at the Emperor's feet as honourable prisoners were Ras Mangasha, son of King Theodore against whom we had fought in 1867, and Ras Selassié, who had been implicated in a rebellion when Governor of the province of Amhara. The minor officers of the empire and the capital formed a background of brilliant colour behind us. Menelik announced that he would fix a date for a private interview shortly and meanwhile invited us to attend the ceremony of consecration of a new church dedicated to St. George at which he would be present on the following morning.

Prince Henry in his letters to the *New York Herald*, which I read later in England, described the audience as short, correct, and cold. Others of his countrymen, however, received a different im-

pression. In an interview with M. Jean Hess, published in the *Figaro* some months afterwards, M. Bonvalot said that the British Mission to Abyssinia had revealed to him the real superiority of method which had enabled Great Britain to become a great colonial nation, with other complimentary expressions which it is unnecessary to repeat. The reports sent to the French Press regarding our proceedings and depreciatory messages from the Havas Agency formed interesting reading on our return. From these also we learned for the first time of a violent dispute which arose between M. Bonvalot and Prince Henry, who embraced a quarrel of his travelling companion M. de Poncins. Of all the comments in the French Press the most to the point was outlined in a series of drawings entitled "*Chez Ménélick*," by Caran d'Ache, reflecting the perplexity created in the mind of the Negus by the succession of rival French missions. In the first the Monarch was shown seated on his throne with a square box by his side, receiving a young man, evidently Prince Henry, who brought offerings which included *Tout Paris* and the *Almanach de Gotha* and pointed at a flag with the words, "*Sire, voilà le drapeau de la France !*" The second picture showed a group of black-bearded officials in pith-helmets bearing the *Code Pénal* and other volumes, who also presented the Tricolor with the announcement, "*Sire, Voilà le drapeau de la République, le seule qui porte le timbre de l'Administration.*" Menelik with a puzzled face says, "*Comment faire—qui me tirera d'embarras ?*" And in the



third picture the lid of the square case by the throne springs open and up comes John Bull as a Jack-in-the-box with the British flag, exclaiming, "*Môa, Sire!*"

We did not suppose that our arrival was particularly welcome to Prince Henry, but with Wingate and Gleichen I paid a visit to his modest camp in the afternoon, which he in due course returned. He was good enough to describe us in the *Herald* as "very correct, well-brought-up, and amiable."

The Coptic Bishop, Abouna Mathios, was delighted to see visitors who could give him news of his native land of Egypt. In his house we found another Bishop, Abouna Petros, who had presided over the Abyssinian Church in the reign of King John. Pinching became very intimate with the benevolent Abouna, who gave us much valuable information. We also called upon Madame Ilg, who had had the pluck to venture on the long journey from Switzerland shortly before our arrival, and was now comfortably established in the house which Menelik had had built for his counsellor. The Lord Chief Justice also received me more than once, and was always embarrassingly hospitable. It is not easy between meals to swallow blocks of highly-peppered meat extracted from the cooking-pot with her fingers by a black handmaiden.

Among the many minor services rendered to an unappreciative country, one for which due credit is not always given, lies in the obligation to swallow unpalatable food and drink in compliance with the laws of hospitality. But the "Breath" at any rate

always produced a powerful, but not unpleasant, alcohol which served to mitigate any inopportune physical protest.

On the day following the dedication of the church we returned to the Gèbi to present our offerings, in many of which the monarch took evident delight. None pleased him better than the mounted skins, which he placed by his side on the daïs, summoning a number of his suite, who gazed almost with consternation at the monarch sitting between the open jaws of a tiger and a polar bear. He was delighted to receive a reproduction of one of the illuminated Ethiopic manuscripts from Magdala now in the British Museum, which the generosity of Lady Meux had enabled Sir Wallis Budge to publish. Other countries, said the Negus, had treated him like a child and sent him musical boxes, but we had brought offerings of real value and service.

We were then conducted to the apartments of the Empress Taitu to present the Queen's gifts. We found her in a room strewn with brilliantly coloured carpets sitting like Menelik on a daïs under a canopy. She was partly veiled, but not sufficiently so to prevent our seeing a quick and keen eye and a skin very much fairer than that of her husband. She was a daughter of the Ras of Gondar, where the people are said to have lighter complexions than in any other region of Abyssinia. The extremities were small and delicate. A black silk cloak over garments of white disguised the amplitude of her figure. She was said to be devoted to her garden, and the presence of a number of pet dogs



suggested an amiable character. This remarkable lady had been famed for great beauty in her youth, and she exercised a strong influence over her husband. At that time she was reported to be about forty years old. When she went abroad she was always closely veiled, and custom prescribed that the public should disappear on the approach of her mule. Our reception was regarded as an exceptional compliment. She took the greatest interest in any details with which we could supply her regarding the life and activities of our sovereign, whose kind thought for herself in the Jubilee year Taitu acknowledged with gratitude.

The life of Taitu had been full of varied experiences. After her third marriage had been dissolved she retired for a time into a convent. But she was evidently not intended for claustral seclusion, and she emerged to contract yet a fourth marriage before she became Menelik's Queen. Divorce or the annulment of marriage evidently presented no serious obstacles in Abyssinia, where, moreover, the relations between the sexes are, as we were informed by those who knew the country well, extremely lax. A considerable number of the population in fact remain up to a certain age under a sort of minor excommunication in consequence of the irregularity of their intercourse. When the fever in the blood declines, and they elect to settle down permanently with the companion of their household they are once more received into communion.

Before proceeding to narrate the history of my

negotiations and conversations with the Negus during a long series of meetings I will conclude the present chapter with a few recollections of Abyssinia in 1897.

On the first Thursday after our arrival we were invited to lunch at the Gèbi. Thursdays were generally devoted to the entertainment of the chief officers and officials at a midday banquet. For us a table was prepared in European fashion and, beyond the fact that our meal was supplemented by some excellent Burgundy and a *tej* of superlative quality, it calls for no special comment. Interest centres rather on the Ethiopian viands. Menelik was served upon his divan. The principal Rases and highest officers of State had their meal at the same time. The Emperor sent us portions to taste of the highly peppered pilaus which were prepared for himself. These with quantities of meat seasoned with red pepper seemed to be the universal food. The bread is a damp grey-coloured round chupatty, nearly half an inch thick and about the size of a large plate, in lieu of which it is also used. A pile of such bread is set before each guest, together with a flagon or gombo of *tej* covered with a square of silk. The pilau was well cooked, but so hot with red pepper that our sensitive palates were on fire after a few mouthfuls. We were surprised on the conclusion of our repast at being invited by Menelik to smoke. His predecessor, the fanatical King John, had forbidden his people tobacco in any form, and a breach of his ukase was punished by cutting off the lips.



Curtains which had screened off the greater portion of the audience hall were now drawn back, and the senior officers were admitted, seated in rows and served. When these had feasted and retired other groups were successively admitted. Some two thousand in all, we were informed, would enjoy this hospitality. But we did not remain till the end of the banquet. So long as I was there I did not see that any raw meat, which is a favourite food with the people, was offered.

In conversation after lunch Menelik enquired whether our medicine chest contained any remedies recently discovered by science. Pinching explained that he had a new antidote for snake-bites, but that we had happily had no occasion to use it. The Negus said that in his country a man who was bitten by a snake would come to him to be touched, or if unable to travel would obtain the touch by proxy through a friend. The man thus touched frequently recovered. How could this be accounted for? Pinching endeavoured to make clear to him the influence of suggestion and the curative effect of faith. Menelik listened with great interest and said he supposed that must be the real explanation.

The members of the mission rapidly made acquaintance with the few Europeans and the more numerous Asiatics in Addis Abbaba. The Russian Léontieff, on whom I called with Wingate, was a handsome tall fair-bearded adventurer of plausible address. He was described as Count Léontieff, having apparently received that title, hitherto unknown in Ethiopia, from Menelik, who had also, we were

amused to hear, exalted M. Lagarde to the rank of Duke of Entotto! Discussing with Léontieff the experiences of a fellow countryman of his in big-game shooting, I learned from him that the Abyssinians were on the Sobat River, which runs into the Nile south of Fashoda. Léontieff denied the truth of the current rumour that he had taken part in, and been wounded at, the battle of Adua, at which, however, he said that M. Clochette had been present. He himself had only joined the Emperor shortly after the battle. He confirmed what we had learned from Italian prisoners that their position had for a time been desperate because their captors had no food to give them. The Abyssinians had eaten all the neighbouring country bare, and they could not have held out in their actual position for another week if Baratieri had only refrained from attacking them. This was confirmed by information from other sources.

The prisoners with whom I had talked on the road were indeed very uncomplaining. They admitted that once the terrible hunger march was over and they had been billeted among the villages the Abyssinians gave them what they had for themselves, little enough though it was. Menelik, who was anxious to be regarded as a civilised ruler, had after Adua issued a proclamation to the effect that if disputes arose between the Italian prisoners and his people, the case would not be tried but the Abyssinians would always be regarded as in the wrong. There had been unpleasant whispers of mutilation in Europe. From such evidence as I



could obtain some authentic cases of mutilation of the living had no doubt occurred, but they were traceable to the half-savage allies or subjects of Ethiopia.

It was from Asiatic merchants or craftsmen, and especially from a friendly Afghan who came from Peshawar, that we learned most. He had been seriously ill and was profoundly grateful for the relief and attention which he received from Pinching. A few French merchants who had found their way up were also cordial to fellow-Europeans. They were all much depressed by the unfavourable prospect of business and their views were in pronounced contrast with the exuberant articles on the resources of the country which had appeared in the Paris Press, inspired no doubt by the promoters of the project for a railway from Jibuti to Shoa. By comparing and co-ordinating various statements we were able to arrive at certain conclusions.

The most important fact established was that M. Clochette, who was to lead a relief expedition to the Nile with supplies and to join hands with Captain Marchand coming from the west, had left Addis Abbaba some weeks before we arrived, and was organizing his caravan under Mt. Managasha, two or three hours' march distant. He had with him two French *sous-officiers* who had been brought up by Lagarde and some 200 Abyssinians. It was stated that he was taking 200,000 rounds of ammunition. With Bonvalot, who had been present at our reception, we never made touch. He had

left immediately afterwards for Clochette's camp.

We also ascertained that the Khalifa had sent a mission to Menelik. The eight members of which it was composed had been lodged in the compound of the Coptic Abouna and were really treated like prisoners. No one but the Negus himself had any communication with them. There had been a rumour, of which no definite confirmation could be obtained, that they had offered him Metemmeh in return for his goodwill and support. The Bishop informed us that Menelik had had little to say to the Dervish envoys and had advised them not many days after their arrival to return to their own country.

The Abyssinians were well armed. The Emperor had adhered to the Brussels Act, which allowed him as sovereign to import arms for his own use. He had thus established a sort of monopoly which, as a disenchanted French merchant complained to us, destroyed the business of the petty trader. The facility with which the Abyssinians had been armed under a liberal interpretation of the Brussels Act had made them a formidable factor in Africa. But they were dependent on imported ammunition which, stored, together with the royal treasure, in caves in the mountains of Ankober, suffered from the damp. An attempt to establish a local cartridge factory had failed. The Gallas who were employed there always broke the moulds.

The merchants told us that since Adua the prestige of Europeans had greatly diminished.



Before that time it had been a tradition with the Abyssinians to accord an European the honours due to one of their own generals. But now their heads were much swollen and they believed themselves to be the elect of nations.

## CHAPTER V

1897

Negotiations with Menelik. Abyssinian ambitions on the Nile. The festival of St. Raguel. Ritual dance of the priests. Linguistic difficulties. A treaty agreed upon. Final conversation. Relations of confidence established. Preparations for departure from Addis Abbaba. Incidents of the return journey. Spectacular demonstration on our departure. Harrar again. Negotiations with Makunnen. Harrington. Carl Inger. Homewards. The last day of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Visit to Windsor. Lord Salisbury and the situation in the Equatorial Provinces. Capture of Abou Hamed.

The remarkable man who had directed the destinies of Ethiopia at a critical moment was now known to be a considerable factor in African affairs, but he was probably regarded in Europe as little more than an exceptionally enlightened savage, while the real personality of one so remote, if it occurred to anyone to consider it, had certainly not engaged general attention. During the many interviews which I had with him I formed a high opinion both of his intelligence and of his character, with the human side of which, after making due allowance for all the differences of circumstance and surrounding, I was very favourably impressed. His manner was dignified and at the same time cordially unreserved. He made no pretence of understanding



things which were outside his own experience and wasted no time on phrases. His energy was astonishing. By rising before dawn and beginning his day with prayers in chapel at 6 a.m. he made time to attend personally to every detail of administration in a country constituted of many heterogeneous elements. Accessible to all his subjects from the highest to the lowest he had succeeded in winning universal regard and affection. As little or nothing has been written regarding Menelik in intimacy I propose to record somewhat fully the purport of our conversations, which reveal him in a sympathetic light. To most of our meetings, which continued with intervals for over a fortnight, Wingate accompanied me, and Swayne was present during the discussion of the Somali frontier.

At the first private interview, which took place in a small pavilion in the Gêbi, we dealt only in generalities, but the ground was prepared for future exchanges of views and a pleasant relation was established. Waldo Haimanaut interpreted on my behalf. M. Ilg came in after a while and remained, but he took no part in the conversation. Menelik at once broke the ice by saying: "I was glad when I saw your face at our first meeting, because there was no anger in it." I replied that there was no reason for anger, nor had we anything to conceal from him. We only desired to regulate our eastern frontier, to safeguard our commercial interests and, on behalf of Egypt, to come to some territorial understanding.

When I reminded him that by Admiral Hewett's

treaty with King John, Ethiopia was bound to refer to the British Government and to no one else all disputes with Egypt, the Negus surprised me by saying that he thought that treaty had been upset by our "bringing in" the Italians between ourselves and him, and I enquired what he had in his mind. He replied that we had brought Italy to Massawah. Such a suggestion had no doubt been sedulously fostered in Abyssinia by influences inimical to Great Britain. I explained that the occupation of Massawah had been the act of an independent European nation for which we could be in no way held responsible. Egypt was not at that time in a position to contest the reversion, nor were we entitled to raise opposition. The treaty which had been concluded with ourselves was not vitiated by the action of Italy. Ethiopia was still in possession of the Boghos territory which she had occupied under its provisions, and we must adhere to our claim to settle any disputes or issues arising between his country and Egypt. We had accepted the text of the treaty of Ucciali, negotiated by him with the representative of Italy, in the form in which it had been notified to my Government, and it had only recently become known to us that the Italian version was regarded in Ethiopia as not correctly interpreting the Amharic. Believing the text with which we had been furnished to be correct we had caused a communication regarding our frontier in Somaliland to be conveyed to him through the Italian Government, which we understood to be, by the terms of that treaty, the proper channel.



Thereafter we had considered the frontier question to be definitively settled. Menelik rather disconcerted me by saying that no such communication had ever reached him.

In regard to commerce I explained that for the present all we required was a guarantee of treatment equal to that of the most favoured nation. He assured me this would present no difficulty. As however the event proved, perhaps when other influences had been brought to bear on him, it was by no means an easy matter to arrange. For the rest, he genially observed we would settle everything we could settle, and postpone what we could not. He would duly study the boundary questions. On my asking him whether there were any further explanations which I could offer regarding matters which might have been misunderstood in the past, he said he saw no use in discussing the past and only cared now about the future. Then looking at me with a very cordial smile he repeated his former words, expressing satisfaction that there was no anger in my face, and added that he had no doubt we should quickly agree. So after giving him an assurance of our peaceful intentions on the west, I took my leave feeling that we had made a fair beginning.

A day or two passed before I saw him again, and then, equipped with the information which we had meanwhile obtained, I asked him how he interpreted his obligations under the Brussels Act. Menelik assumed that I was referring to the slave trade, and said he had taken every measure in his power to put

it down, adding, "My people have hard heads, leave me to deal with them. I know what to do." The punishments which he inflicted were indeed drastic, if our information was correct; for slave raiding or trading amputation of the foot, for mutilation death. I told him that my question for the moment was rather inspired by anxiety to know whether he realised that his signature involved a solemn obligation to prevent the passage of arms and ammunition to regions where the slave-trade prevailed, such as the Soudan. He replied that he thoroughly understood this. Some time before he had discovered that merchants were conveying arms across his dominions, and he had given the frontier Governors the strictest orders to stop their passage. The Dervishes were moreover just as much his enemies as they were ours. I suggested that vigilance was equally necessary in the south-west of Ethiopia and casually observed that I had heard of large consignments of ammunition going westwards with M. Clochette. For the moment it seemed more opportune merely to drop a hint that his movements were known to me. Menelik said the expedition in question was only a sporting one and that supervision would be maintained over the arms and ammunition.

Like Ras Makonnen the Emperor expressed his failure to understand our refusal to allow the passage of arms through Zeila. I therefore explained to him the Anglo-French agreement of February, 1888, adding that if the French Government did not consider that its terms precluded them from according the facilities authorised by the Brussels Act,



there was no reason why we should not adopt the same attitude, on receiving his personal assurance that such arms or ammunition were for the State service or for himself. He said that that was all he could ask for. Meanwhile I pointed out that he was really under considerable obligations to us for having closed the door at Zeila, as none of the tribes with whom he was at war had been able to obtain supplies. He replied, "You have acted as honourable men."

We then approached the question of our claims in Somaliland, of which he professed to have been kept in ignorance. M. Ilg would call in the afternoon with maps showing the frontier which had been adopted with the coterminous French colony. I was able to offer him free entry at Zeila for all goods destined for his own personal use, and he asked me to draft a clause setting forth what we wished to secure in the way of most favoured nation treatment. As regards the frontier with Egypt, and in fact the boundaries of Ethiopia generally, it now appeared that a circular letter had been addressed to the powers which I had never seen, putting forward the most extensive claims to a dominion not only covering nearly half of our Somali Protectorate, but also extending westward to the Nile. It claimed to reconstitute the ancient limits of Ethiopia. It was clear that on both sides we had been acting in the dark, and we agreed that the only sound course would be to begin afresh on the basis of the existing situation, and by reasonable mutual concessions to come to some understanding.

From M. Ilg I learned that the various border governors were engaged in rapidly extending Abyssinian occupation in many directions. Menelik himself had made it clear that his ambition embraced a portion of the Nile. It became evident to me that the more prudent course would be to postpone all question of delimitation on the western side until after we had reached Khartoum and our reoccupation of the old Egyptian provinces on the river had become an accomplished fact. I gathered from Ilg that though the Emperor assembled councils of Rases to consider grave issues he acted as his own Minister and allowed no one to interfere in public matters. As regards the treaty with Italy Menelik had agreed to a facultative discretion to use that country as an intermediary in foreign affairs. In the Italian text the clause had been interpreted as a binding obligation to do so, and he had first become aware of the discrepancy through a letter from the British Government requesting him, since he had undertaken to place his foreign relations in the hands of Italy, to communicate with us through that Government. He was very indignant, though he would in practice have been quite ready to avail himself of the good offices of the Italian Government if they would have withdrawn an interpretation which he maintained he had never accepted, and which, being tantamount to a Protectorate, placed him in a humiliating position. The refusal to do so had made war inevitable.

It would fill too many pages to recount all the



vicissitudes of our long discussions. He expressed himself as disappointed when I said that we could not go into the question of the boundaries of ancient Ethiopia, nor could we withdraw our protection from certain Somali tribes in well-defined areas who had grown accustomed to our rule. He said that he did not understand maps and felt unable to deal with the matter without the advice of Ras Makonnen, for whom he proposed to send. To this I could not agree, as it would entail our remaining on into the period of the great rains, and I was responsible for the health of the mission. In the end it was arranged that I should settle these matters directly with Ras Makonnen on the way home. He would accept whatever his nephew agreed to, and notes could be subsequently exchanged confirming the settlement. I urged him not to be too grasping in his instructions to Harrar. He admitted that what I had told him threw a new light on a subject of which he knew but little. It became clear that apparent aggressions on the frontier which had a short time previously threatened to lead to a very disagreeable incident had been made rather through ignorance than deliberately. Menelik, with whom I was now on the friendliest terms, struck me as quite straightforward and anxious for a solution.

Our daily discussions were interrupted by a high ecclesiastical festival in honour of the archangel St. Raguel, which took place at a church on a ridge of the Entotto mountains near the ancient but now abandoned capital. It necessitated an early start at six in the morning and a climb to an alti-

tude of 10,000 feet. The Negus had already arrived before we reached the octagonal church, at which the Bishop Mathios conducted the ceremonies. The real interest began when we adjourned to a wooden balcony outside, where the Negus took up his position under a big red umbrella of State. The Bishop stood beside him. We were the only other guests invited to join him on the balcony. In a hollow square formed by the deacons and acolytes on the area in front of the church we witnessed the ritual dance of the priests, which commemorates the dance of David before the Ark of the Covenant. The assistants chanted in the meanwhile to the accompaniment of three big silver drums and the clang of the tambourine discs on the bars of the systrum. This instrument, like the tobe or toga, would appear to be another survival in Abyssinia of ancient tradition inherited from Egypt. It precisely resembles the systrum with which we are familiar in statues or on reliefs of Apollo and the Muses. When the dance ended Menelik, requesting us to follow, marched three times round the wooden gallery acclaimed by the spectators. Then the soldiers who lined all the surrounding ridges, numbering, we were told, 15,000, fired a *feu de joie*, which, starting with those nearest the church, ran along the mountain-crest for the best part of a mile in either direction. Ball cartridge was used, and a hail of bullets distributed itself over the neighbouring ranges.

Then this vast body of men, with the agility of goats, climbed down the steep slopes, dropping from



rock to rock, and formed up again in the plain below. We also descended as rapidly as possible by the footpath and, dismounting, drew up in a line to salute the Emperor when he rode past, preceded by his scarlet-clad kettle-drummers on mules. He appeared much gratified and, turning aside, begged me to mount and ride between him and his son-in-law, Ras Mikhail, the king or governor of the Wollo Gallas, who had arrived during the ceremony. The procession formed once more and we proceeded across the plain to the Gébi. It was evident that Menelik had sought on this ceremonious occasion to do special honour to the British Mission.

By this time I had drafted a form of treaty with Ethiopia. It was brought back to me with certain modifications which I could not accept. I therefore returned to the Gébi and after some discussion concluded that our divergencies of view were not insuperable. Menelik argued that having signed the Brussels Act there was no need for him to engage himself by Treaty to refrain from supplying arms to the Dervishes. Eventually, however, he gave way on this point. He added that, though it might not be opportune at the moment for him to attack them, he could never be at peace with a people who had killed a King, who had defiled churches and carried off precious relics. He even hinted at possible common action against them in the future. In view, however, of his evident ambitions in the Nile area I did not encourage him to make any definite offer.

He appeared to apprehend that a most-favoured-

nation clause would preclude him from granting concessions in return for services rendered. It might suit him, he said, to remit a portion of the taxes due from a merchant who had carried out his orders with great rapidity. Was he to be denied such liberty of action? I succeeded, however, at last in overcoming his mistrust, explaining that orders given on his own personal account would not be affected. We were only considering the general imports of the country. He had evidently no conceptions of economic development or any desire to promote it, nor did he seem anxious to open up the country to European penetration. The predatory habits of his people were opposed to progress, for which the necessary elements of stability did not exist. The forecast which I then formed, that even with a railway from the coast Abyssinia would long remain inhospitable to enterprise, has been fully justified by experience.

Infinite patience was required to make him understand the forms of official verbiage. The Amharic language expresses itself in short, positive, staccato sentences, and he could not understand the use of the future or the conditional tense in treaty provisions. Ever since the disagreement over the text of the Treaty of Ucciali he had remained suspicious of the pitfalls which translation into a European language presented. As the syntax of a conditional sentence could not be understood by him we had to eliminate all "shalls" and "wills" and substitute the present tense. I told him that though he compelled me to be ungrammatical I



would, to please him, submit. Finally the question arose of the language in which our treaty should be drawn up. No Abyssinian, he said, understood English well enough to control the text. Would I agree to sign a French and an Amharic version? I said if he required an Amharic text I must insist on an English one which we should regard as binding. A threatened *impasse* was overcome by my suggesting an exchange of notes containing a French translation which would be accepted by both parties as a reference in case of any divergence of view as to the interpretation of the English or Amharic. Nothing therefore then remained but to prepare the final texts and to make a translation into French.

All our discussions were pleasant and conducted in a spirit of cordiality. But the bald narrative can convey little idea of the patience demanded to bring to a conclusion a negotiation which would have been a simple matter to settle with any one familiar with conventional forms and Western methods. Fortunately we had early established a friendly relation of mutual confidence, and I ended by feeling a great respect for the strong man of Ethiopia, who made a genuine effort to understand the position and overcome his mistrust of his own inexperience.

When I had received his assurance that all might now be regarded as settled on the lines laid down, I informed him that I had been charged to convey to him the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. A feeling of delicacy had not allowed me to refer to this until after our discussions

had been concluded. He was greatly pleased by this attention, the more so when his anxiety to know whether it was the highest class of the Order had been satisfied.

I then told Menelik that now that our formal business had been concluded I was anxious to have some private conversation with him alone through my own interpreter. On his assenting we discussed at length, and with perfect frankness, certain African problems which were of interest to his country and came to an understanding on some questions which were also at that time of particular importance to ourselves. Although the matters dealt with at this concluding interview belong to past history and can no longer affect present or future issues, I do not feel at liberty to disclose their nature here, and I only refer to it because the discussion revealed that Menelik was a man of quick and keen intelligence capable of appreciating political situations with a clearness of apprehension which I had hardly anticipated. The future showed that my confidence in this remarkable African potentate was not ill-founded, and I had the satisfaction of realising that more had been accomplished by the mission than might appear from any concrete results recorded in a treaty.

A day had to be devoted to copying and collating texts. Meanwhile our mule transport, restored by a long rest and tolerable grazing, was collected from the neighbouring villages. Presents were distributed to all who had been of service to us and farewell visits were paid. Then on the 14th of May the



whole staff went in state to the Gébi for the ceremony of signing and sealing the treaty, and conferring the Grand Cross on the Negus. Ten horses with silver-studded saddles and bridles had been sent as his gift to the members of the mission, and I was also presented with the complete costume of a Ras, including a shield and sword with silver-gilt mountings; but I was not created Duke of Ankober. Presents for the Queen were also conveyed to the camp, and the Empress Taitu sent a very curious necklace of gold filigree work, such as is worn by all the Abyssinian Empresses. Tradition claims that it is a copy of the ornament worn by the Queen of Sheba when she paid her historic visit to Solomon and incidentally became the mother of the first Menelik. We rode to the royal residence on our new mounts and carried out our last duties with impressive ceremony. The Negus took leave of each member of the mission individually and invited me to remain for a short private conversation, which was of the most cordial character. I then took my leave of this strong, autocratic African potentate, for whom, after a fortnight of daily intercourse, I had learned to feel a sincere regard. The relief which the conclusion of our business afforded was accompanied by a sense of genuine regret that the moment had come to say good-bye.

After farewell visits to the Coptic Bishop, who sighed to think we were returning to the fleshpots of Egypt, and to my friend the Lord Chief Justice, the heartiest and most hospitable of Abyssinians, we began to demobilise in anticipation of a start on

the following day. The camp was to break up early and get away in charge of George Effendi, while the British officers were to lunch with the Ilgs and follow in the afternoon. Our departure was made the occasion for a remarkable demonstration which should leave no doubt in the capital that the mission had proved a success.

Madame Ilg, the plucky wife of the Swiss Counsellor of State, one of the very few European ladies who had then visited Addis Abbaba, entertained us at the last civilised meal which we were to enjoy for many a day. We had not yet drunk our coffee when we were told that the Emperor's guards had arrived to escort us. Bidding adieu to our hostess, we were accompanied by Ilg to the Gébi, in front of which a vast assembly of Abyssinian soldiers was collected. We saw Menelik and Taitu seated on a balcony. Dismounting and drawing up in a line, we bowed three times, and remounted to ride away. Then we heard the royal drums beating within. The drummers on their mules issued from the enclosure and took up a position in front of us. The soldiers—our military authorities estimated them at 20,000 men—divided into two bodies, one of which preceded us while the second formed a rearguard. The commander of the army, Ras Mangasha Tekkem, rode by me. M. Ilg and Gerasmach Joseph followed. The drums alternately whispered softly or rolled like thunder, while the notes of flute and shawm broke shrilly through. As a pageant the scene under the bright African sun was unsurpassed. Thus for three miles we rode,



accompanied by this extraordinary procession flashing with the glint of arms and vivid with the brilliant dresses of the officers among the white-toga'd rank and file. Such an exceptional honour had, we learned from M. Ilg, never been accorded to any other mission. Then we took our leave and trotted on to the first camp on our homeward trek of 500 miles.

This demonstration had been wholly unanticipated and we had every reason to be satisfied. Prince Henry of Orleans in his letter to the *New York Herald* tried to explain it away. He wrote: "The English are going. Much good may it do them. We shall be able to breathe.—The Negus wished to repair the slip made on their arrival. They did not meet the people sent to receive them. Now they are going away amid an escort of 20,000 men who have appeared at the signal, their guns on their shoulders and their banners before them. And every one gives a little Ouf!" He himself, after enjoying his "little Ouf," returned a fortnight later to the coast and did not, for reasons which we could only conjecture, accompany the Clochette expedition, which started three days after we had left Addis Abbaba on its forlorn hope to reach the Nile. Soon after our departure I observed in our camp a lady of stately proportions who displayed conspicuous blue gums when she smiled. On enquiry I ascertained that she was the wife of Ambascié, who appeared to stand in considerable awe of her voluble tongue; but I could never discover from where she came or at what moment she had

joined us. With the exception of Queen Taitu she was the only Abyssinian lady whose acquaintance I had the privilege of making.

While the difficulties of the return journey to Harrar were lightened by a greatly diminished number of loads, they were aggravated by the constant shortness of local supplies and the resulting discontent among our camp-followers. On the second day we met Major Nerazzini, who had been entrusted by the Italian Government with the conclusion of final negotiations for peace. The weather was distinctly cooler, and it was not long before we had ominous reminders of the approach of the rainy season and were obliged to trench round our tents at night to prevent our effects being carried away by the runnels. A terrific thunderstorm encountered us one evening in the mountains and the lightning appeared to be striking the ground all round us. The rain brought out the flowers. Lilies and jasmine and wild rose perfumed the upland valleys. A fair amount of game birds, bustard and guinea-fowl, were obtained, with an occasional antelope; but the ostriches in the plain of the Hawash were scared by the cries of our caravan-drivers at a psychological moment. The river was already swollen too high to be forded and we were compelled to cross by the bridge.

Lack of food at moments threatened to produce mutiny in our caravan. One morning, in a dispute which arose over the proprietorship of water, a Galla, a splendid statuesque specimen of nude humanity, was threatening our Abyssinian officer with his



leaf-bladed spear. Ambascié had only a little cane in his hand, with which he kept striking at the Galla. I was for the moment alone with him and also unarmed. But luckily two of the Aden Sowars were within hail, and they turned back, covering the Galla with their rifles. He retired muttering curses, but he had all my sympathies. Four or five days' march from Harrar a Galla mule-driver in a moment of exasperation thrust his knife into the back of one of our heads of section, Ahmed, a handsome native of the R'hotta tribe, who live between Gildessa and Harrar. He was one of our best men. The assailant was at once secured and bound. The wound was deep and dangerous, the blade had penetrated to the kidney, and Pinching told me he had little hope of saving the man. Ahmed was however stitched up, and after a night spent under the flap of a tent he was carried on an improvised stretcher to the nearest village, where we left him with strict injunctions to the head-man to give him nothing but milk. We remained a week in Harrar and, incredible as it may seem, Ahmed arrived in camp apparently recovered before we left. The wound had healed at the first intention. He refused to prosecute the man who had stabbed him, saying that he was now well and the matter was therefore happily ended.

As our portable stores were consumed and loads diminished progressively, our transport officers conceived the brilliant idea of initiating sales by auction of our surplus animals in some of the larger centres. Once the idea was explained to him, the Abyssinian

delighted in a gamble and the villagers bid against each other with the greatest keenness. Our Mess President was magnificent at these sales, spurring on the reluctant native to go one better in a strange mixture of Arabic diluted with such Amharic as he had picked up. His surgical skill had been a great asset to the mission in gaining credit with the local people. Some of the patients he had treated on the upward journey were waiting for us on the road to express their acknowledgments. Among them was a warrior who had been wounded at Adua from whose leg he had successfully extracted some splinters of bone. He was indeed full of resource. There are no prohibitionists in Abyssinia, and our diminutive stock of whisky was evidently not going to hold out against the inevitable demands of hospitality unless the Mess President could devise a substitute. He was equal to the occasion. His medical equipment included a dozen bottles of spirit of wine. From these, with a little sugar and a due proportion of essence of peppermint, he manufactured a very creditable *Crème de Menthe* which was greatly appreciated by visitors.

This incidental tribute to the best of travelling companions reminds me how little has been said in these pages of the other members of our happy family, and how inevitably egotistic must appear my record of an expedition to which each one of its members contributed all his energy and goodwill. I am only too conscious that I have not done justice to Wingate's invaluable advice, to his im-



perturbable calm, and his understanding of African character. In three or four months of camp life together men grow to know each other very intimately, and as the majority of us were to continue in close intercourse during the next few years in Egypt it is pleasant to record that we returned even closer friends than when we started.

And so, often wet through and sometimes hungry, but cheerful at the prospect, now not remote, of returning to home and civilisation, we made a final three-hour march on the 31st of May from Lake Haramayah to Harrar, whither Harrington had come to meet us. Cecil and Gleichen, who were in advance, encountered him outside the town, to their pleased surprise. Ras Makunnen, warned of our approach, also rode out to meet us and conducted the whole party to luncheon at his house. The completion of a journey in sixteen days for which mule caravans reckoned a month, four days less than we had taken to cover the same ground on our outward journey, was something of an achievement, and I believe at that time a record. It was a great advantage to me to have Harrington at hand for the opening of negotiations with Ras Makunnen, with whom he had already established cordial relations. He could not however wait for their conclusion, having to precede us to Zeila to make preparations for our transit over the waterless country and our eventual transport to Aden.

These negotiations were by no means easy. The Abyssinians had encroached considerably across the frontier which we claimed for the Somali

Protectorate east of Gildessa, and Abyssinian huts constructed in the disputed area had been burned by our people, so that the tension between Zeila and Harrar had at one time caused some anxiety. The sandy areas involved were in themselves worthless, and we were not disposed to use force in order to compel evacuation of a few square miles of inhospitable country and prolong unneighbourly conditions which would prejudice the trade route. Experience of the nature of the ground in dispute had now given me a better appreciation of real values. The tribes frequenting these regions were nomadic, and the essential for them was to secure free access to grazing grounds and water on either side of the border. The settlement eventually concluded made due provision for this, and though it involved a recognition of Abyssinian jurisdiction over a certain area claimed by our Protectorate in which Ethiopian outposts had for some time been established, it laid down a well-defined frontier. Makunnen had contemplated a line much further east and complained that we were hard bargainers. I, on the other hand, interpreting the spirit of my instructions to be in the first place the conciliation of Ethiopia during the last phase of the Khartoum campaign, made certain concessions which were criticised by travellers who had penetrated into Somaliland on big-game expeditions and therefore laid claim to special knowledge. It would, however, have been impossible to dislodge the Abyssinians from posts which they had occupied without having recourse to arms, and a failure to reach a settlement



would have prejudiced our certainty of securing friendly neutrality on the western side. The arrangement was only accepted *ad referendum*, but it was fully approved by the authorities at home.

Donkey and hill-camel transport had been secured for the next stage of our journey to Gildessa. The remainder of our baggage mules were sold by auction not unsuccessfully, and the first section of the caravan started on the morning of the 4th of June. Makunnen had had a big tent erected at the first camp, and in the afternoon he rode to that point and spent the night there with us. On the following morning we bade him good-bye with sincere regret. He was a perfect Abyssinian gentleman. His quick intelligence readily assimilated new impressions and ideas, and I imagine he owed a good deal to association with the cultivated and kindly Monseigneur Thaurin. Had he lived to follow his uncle as King of Kings, in accordance with Menelik's intention, the civil war in Abyssinia and the anarchy which ensued with the succession of Lij Jasu would have been avoided.

Not long before we reached Gildessa we encountered a party of three white men with a few mules who endeavoured to pass, like Kinglake's Englishman in the desert, within a few yards of us without that exchange of courtesies usual when Europeans meet in the wilds of Africa. Gleichen accordingly turned and rode after them, greeting them as fellow-travellers in French. The leader, a fair-bearded young man in Oriental dress, replied civilly but seemed reluctant to give his name.

It proved to be Carl Inger. The name was interestingly familiar to all of us who came from Egypt. Wingate had his *dossier* by heart. In the course of the previous year this young man had been arrested, half-starved, in the neighbourhood of Suakin, in Dervish dress and in possession of drill-books in Arabic. Being an Austrian subject he was eventually sent back to his own country after he had given an undertaking to abandon any further attempt to join the Dervishes. Later he had been heard of in Constantinople posing as an emissary of the Khalifa. On arriving at the coast we discovered that he had made an attempt to enter Abyssinia through Zeila, in the hopes of reaching the Nile from the coast, but Harrington had turned him back. At Jibuti, however, he did not encounter the same difficulty.

I despatched a letter to Ras Makunnen setting forth his antecedents and begging him not to allow this irrepressible individual to proceed any further. His ambition to join the Dervishes was thus once more thwarted, and though if he survives he probably owes his life to this intervention, he no doubt cursed the bad luck which led the ubiquitous Englishman once more to cross his path on a lonely trail in Africa.

From Gildessa, where a plentiful supply of camels awaited us, Swayne pushed ahead with an advance party. It was terribly hot in the plain, which the rains we had encountered on the high table-lands had not yet reached. As there was a moon we elected to march only in the evenings, loading



up in the afternoon, and reaching camp about midnight. Our tents by day were suffocating, when the thermometer placed under the bed registered 118, and the gun-barrel burned the hand. The only one of our party whose spirits were not damped in this torrid week was the latest-joined member, a young dog-faced monkey who had been annexed on the way down. He must have been born in captivity or caught very young, as he was absolutely at home with humans. He at once attached himself to me and would ride behind me on the mule, jumping off from time to time for a run and then climbing up again by the stirrup leather. Once more we negotiated the waterless country in two stages, and then at last the happy moment came when one long evening and night would bring the welcome sight of the sea. After some eight hours' march in the sultry moonlight through the desolate waste we found at Warabod a store of iced beer awaiting us. The political agent, Colonel Hayes-Sadler, had crossed from Aden to receive us, bringing with him a block of ice, and he had the kind forethought to send out this grateful supply. Our tepid water-bottles had long been drained. The camp monkey was as thirsty as we were, and, having nothing else to offer, I gave him a mug of beer which he greedily consumed. The result was disastrous. I had never before, nor have I ever since, seen anything so ribald as an intoxicated monkey. We were all dead-beat and slept on the sand till morning broke. These few hours' rest also restored Jacko to his normal

respectability. Hayes-Sadler, Harrington, and Swayne rode out to meet us. The *Minto* was waiting to convey us to Aden. A day sufficed to wind up accounts, dispose of surplus stores, and take leave of our Somali attendants, who had proved right good fellows and had thoroughly earned the rewards which awaited them. I handed over my animals to Harrington and parted from the mule which Ras Makunnen had given me as from a very old friend whom I should never see again. General Cunningham once more most hospitably cared for us, and the *Coromandel* carried us homeward through the Red Sea, where we met the north wind, which made life more endurable. Those who were to return to Egypt disembarked at Suez, while Bingham, Cecil, Swayne, and I went on to Port Said, Brindisi, and home.

On the day of our arrival in London took place the last function of the second Jubilee, a great garden party at Buckingham Palace. An invitation awaited me, and, exchanging travel-stained raiment for the garments of civilisation, I duly proceeded thither with my wife. The sudden transition from the Abyssinian highlands and the Somali deserts to the well-dressed crowd of London was almost overwhelming in its impression of contrast. I found myself a centre of interest. The Empress Frederick was there, and it was a great pleasure to see her again after a number of years. I little anticipated then that it was to be our last meeting. The Prince of Wales had followed our movements with the keenest interest, and Chamberlain engaged



me in a long conversation. All the energies of the Empire seemed to be concentrated in the precincts of the Palace round the venerable Queen. But for me the best thing of all was to be home again with those who really mattered. On the following day I was summoned to Windsor to dine and spend the night. The Crown Prince and Princess of Italy, but lately married, were staying there, and I was then presented for the first time to the reigning sovereign, of whom I was to see so much in later years. I remained at Windsor most of the following day, awaiting the opportunity to tell the Queen about our adventures in Shoa and to present the various gifts with which Menelik had entrusted me. The Queen seemed to have aged considerably since I had last seen her. But her interest in everything was as fresh and keen as ever.

A long interview with Lord Salisbury revealed that he was not much preoccupied about Abyssinian encroachments in Somaliland. He was never much concerned with the fate of "light lands in Africa." The French advance towards the Nile was in his eyes a more serious matter, so far as I could diagnose his thoughts. For he listened with great attention to my report, sitting huddled up at his table with a rug on his knees. The policy which both Wingate and I urged in our respective spheres was that our forces in Uganda, where Colonel Macdonald<sup>1</sup> was now in chief command, should stick to the Nile and move down the river as quickly as possible. There seemed to us to be still a fair chance that

<sup>1</sup> Major-General Sir James Macdonald, K.C.I.E.

Macdonald would have reached Fashoda before Marchand. It is possible that had this been attempted the Uganda Soudanese might not have mutinied as they did at the end of 1897. But for the moment the only comment I could elicit from the reserve of the Foreign Secretary, when I explained the imminent danger of Marchand's arrival on the Nile before we had reached Khartoum, was "Well, let us hope he won't get there!"

Failing a course which internal conditions in Uganda may at the time have rendered impracticable, Wingate and I did our best to urge an acceleration of the advance to Khartoum. The problem of transport would no doubt have rendered this very difficult, and even if the necessary number of camels could have been collected the cost of the campaign must have been immensely increased. It would have involved a direct British contribution, but it would have been worth very much to us to have had no Fashoda question. Though neither of our alternatives was adopted we could conscientiously feel that we had given due warning of the critical situation which was likely to arise on the Upper Nile.

Another question the consideration of which we urged in London after our experiences in Somaliland and Abyssinia was the construction of a light railway from the Somali coast to the interior. The project for a line from Jibuti to Harrar was still inchoate, and the bulk of the trade was being carried over the old route to Zeila. It was true that its total amount remained inconsiderable and



that Abyssinia was stubbornly recalcitrant to European penetration, but a seaport which became the terminus of a railway would secure a monopoly in the future, and Somaliland, so long as it remained without communications, was an unprofitable possession which might moreover become an onerous one. As much may indeed be said of any African colony which has only a coastal administration and an indeterminate hinterland. I was not very sanguine that the idea of asking Parliament to provide even the modest credit which would have sufficed to carry a light railway to the Haud, with a branch to Gildessa, would commend itself to a Chancellor of the Exchequer. But had such a scheme been entertained there is little doubt that the fanatical Mad Mullah would never have become so formidable, and we might have been spared the many valuable lives lost and the millions spent in thankless punitive expeditions against that elusive enemy who gave us so much trouble over a period of twenty years.

A few days after my interview I received a very kind letter from Lord Salisbury announcing that a Companionship of the Bath had been conferred upon me. I was also offered the post of Secretary of Legation at Peking, which would have given me promotion over the heads of five or six of my seniors. But the letter making the offer also suggested that I should probably not care to accept the post. As Cromer wished me to remain with him I did not feel I could well leave Cairo at a moment which was for him full of grave domestic anxiety, and

I was personally keen to continue serving there at least until the Nile campaign had been successfully concluded. Had I gone to China I should have been at Peking during the siege of the Legations, which would have added one more very interesting experience to my record.

After a short interval spent in writing up my reports in Abyssinia we left for Baireuth, where we witnessed the performances of Parsifal and the Ring and attended the court of Frau Cosima Wagner. It struck me as strange that so great an artist as Wagner should have had so little sense of the picturesque and graceful in the costumes which piety to his memory as their designer still retained in use. Thence, by Vienna and Venice, we returned to Egypt. At the former place the news reached us of the capture of Abou Hamed at the cost of the lives of two very valuable officers, Sidney and Fitzclarence. This meant that the 230 miles of desert railway along the cord of the arc described by the Nile between Wady Halfa and Abou Hamed had been completed. There have been few more remarkable feats than the construction of this line across the waterless sands to a point actually in the hands of the enemy. Water to supply the engines could only be obtained by artesian boring, and after two unsuccessful attempts it was found. Nothing was impossible to K. and his young engineers. No sooner had the line reached Abou Hamed than work had to be begun on a new stretch of 150 miles along the river to carry it up to the Atbara. Berber had been evacuated, and it then



seemed improbable that the Dervishes would make any resistance north of the Atbara.

A year or two later when I went to Abou Hamed a legend had already attached itself to the two white crosses which mark the desert graves of Sidney and Fitzclarence, and the burial mounds of the Soudanese troopers who fell beside them in the action. No native of those regions would approach the spot after sundown, when it was reported that the black soldiers rose from their graves and stood on guard round the graves of their English Beys.

## CHAPTER VI

1897-98

Disturbances in the provinces. The Sirdar and financial difficulties. Sir Francis Grenfell. British troops go up the Nile. George Steevens. The march to Berber. Prince Henry of Prussia at Port Said. The Battle of the Atbara. Serious illness of Lady Cromer. A second British Brigade formed. Frankie Rhodes and Hubert Howard. The advance to Khartoum. The Battle of Omdurman. The 21st Lancers. Appendix: Lieut. R. de Montmorency's account of the battle.

Cromer had already left when we returned to Egypt in the summer. The spirit in the country was not altogether reassuring. The anniversary of the Sultan's accession, the 31st of August, was marked by some disturbances in the provinces and aggressions against the Christian element. The Arabic press, to whose unhealthy influence I have already referred, was once more becoming extremely violent, and practically advocating rebellion. I was, however, not allowed to intervene at that time. The effect of these incitements was manifested by an episode which took place at the village of Galioub, near Cairo, where a detachment of mounted infantry was stoned by the inhabitants. I thereupon acted without waiting to consult anybody. The village was surrounded by British troops, and



no one was allowed to pass in or out, to or from the fields or the wells, until the delinquents were handed over. Two and twenty of these were surrendered. A special tribunal, sanctioned under a decree of 1895 to try offences against the army of occupation, was at once assembled. The five ringleaders in the attack were sentenced to six and eight months' hard labour in the Soudan. Companies of infantry were established in temporary camps at Tantah and Damanhour, and for the moment, at any rate, there were no more incidents between the Christian and the Mohammedan communities.

After Cromer's return, having some leave due to me, we went to Italy and made a pilgrimage through Umbrian and Tuscan towns to study the great art of Piero della Francesca, whose fresco of the resurrection at Borgo S. Sepolcro appeared to me, as it had to Vasari, to be one of the most solemn and impressive pictures I had ever seen. Our expedition was cut short by the serious illness of my wife, and we had to remain in a modest hotel at Arezzo, where I passed through a brief period of great anxiety. We met with every kindness and attention there until she was well enough for us to move to Rome.

When we settled down again in Cairo I found that a rather strained situation had arisen. Italy had determined to evacuate Kassala, and we were taking over that somewhat isolated outpost. This involved a considerable extension of frontier, and as we had not men enough to hold so long a sali-

ent, the situation was not reassuring. Kitchener's military estimates had been criticised, and he had consequently announced his resignation, a step which, even if it was not meant to be taken too seriously, I rather resented in view of the constant support he had received from Cromer. The borrowing power of the Egyptian Government was limited to one million. The British Government had already advanced £800,000, leaving only £200,000 more to be borrowed. As this was manifestly insufficient to complete the reconquest of the Soudan, it was clear that we must anticipate financial complications in the coming year. K. had already established a great reputation as an organiser of success. But his position was not yet absolute and assured. He was still to stand in need of Cromer's good offices, and fortunately he had to deal with a man who was eminently judicial and impersonal.

The occasion arose in the latter stage of the campaign, when a considerable number of British troops were to be employed, and the War Office desired to entrust the command to a more senior British General. A military mission sent to discuss certain points with Cromer found him obdurate in insisting that the man who had prepared the reconquest was the man to carry it through. But, it was contended, the importance of the British force which would take part in the ultimate operations connoted a general of a certain seniority who could not be placed under the orders of a junior. That difficulty could, Cromer pointed out, easily be overcome by giving Kitchener the higher rank



entailed. I remember with a certain malicious pleasure his answer to one of these officers who ventured to say that he thought Cromer did not perhaps quite appreciate the military point of view. His characteristic comment was: "As regards that, I may remind you that I am myself a major of artillery, and I presume that even the military point of view must, like other things, be governed by the laws of common sense."

It was a great satisfaction to us all in Egypt that at this rather critical moment Sir Francis Grenfell was appointed to command the army of occupation. Not only was he a great personal friend of the Agent and Consul-General, but he had been Sirdar of the Egyptian army from 1885 to 1892. His knowledge of local conditions, his great tact, and the esteem in which he was universally held would smooth the way for the last stages of the Soudan campaign. Not less satisfactory to myself was the appointment of Harrington, which I had strongly urged, to take charge of our interests as representative in Abyssinia, where later he became the first permanent British Minister. We had a critical year before us, and it was encouraging to feel that the men who would have to deal with difficult situations were all in close and intimate relations with one another.

The year 1898 opened with eager excitement in Cairo, for British troops were now ordered to the front. There was reason to believe that a large Dervish force collecting north of the Atbara might attack Berber, and, as I have already pointed out,

the Egyptian army alone was not strong enough to hold the long line. Four British battalions were to go up the river at once. The situation at the moment gave some preoccupation. Three gunboats, which had already patrolled as far as Metemmeh, half-way to Khartoum, were still south of Berber. The Nile was abnormally low, and the banks were proportionally high. The question of attempting to bring them back north of the Fifth Cataract was discussed, but it was decided to leave them on the upper reach. If the Dervishes were to advance and to be defeated it would be impossible to follow up a success so long as river transport was temporarily suspended; and then, as Bimbashi Watson pertinently observed, a watched Nile never rises. It was doubtful whether a sufficient supply of camels could be found to replace water transport, and the cost would have been very great.

As matters stood, there was no alternative to sending British troops at once, though they would have to remain in camp throughout a long period of very hot weather. Under these circumstances the question of financial liability was left to be determined later, and the troops were despatched to the front. Major-General Gatacre came out from England to take command of the British Brigade, consisting of the 1st Lincolnshire and the 1st Warwickshire battalions, with the 1st Cameron Highlanders. The 1st Seaforths were to follow. The general, whose name the genial Mr. Atkins at once converted into Back-acher, worked his men desperately hard in the dry heat of the Soudan.



But he was nevertheless extremely popular, as every one of them was aware that he did far more himself than he ever demanded of them. The three brigades of the Egyptian army were commanded by Colonel Hector Macdonald, Lt.-Colonel Lewis, and Lt.-Colonel Maxwell. Lt.-Colonel Long commanded the Egyptian artillery. In all from 12,000 to 13,000 men were distributed between Berber and the Atbara. Commander Colin Keppel had now taken the place of Colville in charge of the Nile flotilla, with Lieutenants Hood and Beatty to support him.

The march of the British Brigade from the rail-head to Berber, when rumours of a Dervish move made it necessary to accelerate their arrival at the latter place, was a remarkable performance. They covered 118 miles of desert under the Soudan sun in five days, one of which was devoted to a halt. If the men were wonderful, their boots were deplorable. Made of stitched leather without toe-caps, they may have been the good boots they were stated to be in an official answer to a question asked in the House of Commons, but they were evidently good for another climate and for very different ground. The experience of those who knew the country might have been consulted by those responsible for equipment. The Egyptian army authorities had long ago rejected any but riveted boots with toe-caps, which alone resisted the stones and cutting sands of the desert. As it was, the men of the 2nd Brigade were almost barefooted when they reached Berber, while officers' chargers and trans-

port animals were bringing on stragglers who could no longer march.

In the first week of the new year I had been sent to Port Said to greet Prince Henry of Prussia on his way to Kiao Chao in command of the *Deutschland*. The German representative in Cairo, Herr Felix von Müller, went at the same time. We dined on board with the Prince, who was very cordial and discussed old times in Berlin. He spoke to me rather apologetically about a speech of his delivered on the eve of his departure, which had been a good deal criticised, especially for the words addressed to his brother, whose menaces to China had been unpleasantly reminiscent of Attila, in which he accepted "the gospel of Your Sacred Majesty." He had, he said, been very hard worked up to the day fixed for sailing, and final preparations, together with the leave-taking from his family, had imposed a considerable strain upon him. At the very last minute the Emperor had announced his intention of coming on board to dine. "You know," Prince Henry observed, "how my brother warms you up when he speaks." The Emperor had there charged his younger brother to carry overseas the "mailed fist" which became thereafter historically notorious. Prince Henry responded with what he described as a rousing quarter-deck speech, not in the least, he maintained, realising that it was a public occasion, and that reporters were present who would telegraph his words all over the world. It was only when he touched at Portsmouth on his outward journey that he became aware of the



publicity which had been given to the speeches, and he was, he said, not at all surprised that "people were annoyed in England."

A letter from Menelik addressed to the Queen was received early in February ratifying the treaty which I had signed with him. Sir Charles Dilke, who had assumed the part of the universal dissenter, attacked it in Parliament, and Curzon stoutly defended it. It was approved by a very large majority. The actual treaty, securing us equality of economic privileges in Abyssinia and a guarantee that Menelik would do all in his power to prevent arms passing to the Mahdists, whom he declared to be the enemies of his country, embodied only a part of the results achieved by the mission. The real value of our work lay in having established cordial relations with a country where for various reasons our prestige had declined; in having removed certain misapprehensions which it had been the interest of others to foster; and in having assisted Menelik to understand that it might be disadvantageous for his kingdom to constitute the only break in a trans-African road from east to west which another country might eventually become ambitious to establish. The German *National Zeitung*, which could hardly be regarded as an indulgent critic, described the treaty as the one real success obtained after manifold reverses suffered by British policy in recent years.

February, 1898, marked a new stage of progress in the development of Egypt. A contract was signed for the construction of the Nile barrages and

reservoirs at Assiout and Assouan. Cromer was temporarily away, and it was on this occasion that I first made the acquaintance of the late Sir Ernest Cassel, who had had the courage and foresight to finance a scheme of which older financial houses had fought shy. He greatly impressed me by his largeness of view and business capacity. The necessary final arrangements were all made in three days. The contract was signed on the 20th, and the following morning Cassel left for England.

With the despatch of British troops the war correspondents also appeared on the scene. There were all the old campaigners like Bennet Burleigh, whom every one knew by reputation, the lineal descendants of the famous Billy Russell, who first established the position of the war correspondent in the Crimea. But among the younger generation was one very able writer, the late George Steevens, a Balliol man who belonged to the brilliant group of journalists recruited by my friend Harry Cust when he was editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and a protégé of the immortal W. E. Henley. His book *With Kitchener to Khartoum* gives a humorous and at the same time a vivid and picturesque account of the Nile expedition. George Steevens was the best of company, whose cynic humour was in genial contrast with his kindly and gallant heart. His premature death at Ladysmith during the siege was a great grief to all his friends. *Flebilis occidit!* I also then made the acquaintance of Winston Churchill, who was attached to the 21st Lancers, and recorded his experiences in "The Desert War."



The mobile force of Dervishes which had advanced to the Atbara was commanded by the Emir Mahmoud, reputed to be the best fighting man the Khalifa's rule had produced. Their actual position remained for some time uncertain until General Archibald Hunter, the fighting arm of the Egyptian army, succeeded in locating their entrenched and zareeba'd camp beside the then almost dry bed of the river, some 18 miles from the fort at its junction with the Nile. As this force showed no disposition to move, the decision was taken to attack. After a long night march the shelling of their position began at 6 a.m. on Good Friday, and at 7.45 the zareeba was rushed, the enemy being driven back utterly routed over the dry bed of the Atbara. Mahmoud became our prisoner. In the Mahdist camp over 2,000 dead were counted, but this could only represent a portion of the losses in trenches and rifle-pits. The fugitives had many miles of desert to cross before they could reach the Nile, and there the patrolling gunboats were awaiting them. Mahmoud's ten guns were captured, and his force, which had consisted of 16,000 men, was practically annihilated. Our losses were not heavier than might have been anticipated; but the proportion of casualties was heavy among the senior officers. The Colonels of the Lincolns and the Seaforths were both wounded, and Major Napier and Captain Baillie did not recover from their wounds. We were greatly distressed in Cairo to learn the death of Findlay of the Seaforths, who had just been married. His exceptional stature made

him a conspicuous mark. The eldest of the three Findlay brothers had rowed in the Balliol Eight in my time, and the second was before long to succeed me in Cairo. They were all three giants. In all eighty-one were killed and forty-nine wounded.

The Black troops had proved themselves as fine infantry as any in the world. But the devotion of the 10th Soudanese to their commander had produced something like mutiny. A knot of them grouped themselves round Nason Bey, and positively declined to allow him to lead the way over the zareeba. They only said, "At Abou Hamed we lost our Bey (Sidney) and our second-in-command (Fitzclarence). That shall not happen again, and we are here to cover you from the bullets."

Soon after the battle of the Atbara I took my leave, somewhat sooner than usual. Cromer was anxious to be free to leave at an early date, as there was now no longer any doubt that Lady Cromer was seriously ill. The death of Gladstone, which took place at that time, was the occasion of a remarkable manifestation of sympathy. There followed the death, quite sudden as it seemed, of the well-beloved Burne-Jones. He had been working in the afternoon, and died in the night. He was only sixty-five. At the end of July of this year (1898) Bismarck followed Gladstone. Thus the two biggest figures in the political world during the latter half of the nineteenth century, who, though their lives were practically coeval had never met, passed away almost simultaneously. Events have since shaken the judgment which



most men had formed at the time as to which of the two had achieved the more enduring work. I returned alone to Egypt. We had acquired a London residence in Stratford Place, and I left my wife behind there to instal herself.

While in London I had been sounded as to whether I should care to go to Persia. Under ordinary circumstances I should have welcomed the opportunity, as I was now embarking on my fifth summer in Cairo. But it was impossible for me to leave Cromer at such a moment, as he wished me to remain, and his wishes were more important than my own inclinations. The doctors had given the gravest of verdicts on Lady Cromer's health. The most critical year in the history of the new Egypt had begun. There seemed, moreover, to be every possibility that I might receive the promotion which my seniority indicated as due with leaving Cairo, so I decided to stand by the ship. I was in fact soon afterwards promoted to be Secretary of Legation. To become a junior Secretary of Legation in one's fortieth year did not impress me as a brilliant consummation, even though I had had exceptionally interesting work, and opportunities which did not fall to the lot of all. Curzon, whose studies of the East clearly indicated him for the post, was now appointed Viceroy of India, and Clinton Dawkins was leaving Egypt for the same destination, to take up the post of Finance Minister. I began to feel I was falling behind my contemporaries. Some of the duties which I had to perform in the spring and summer of 1898, moreover,

appeared to me unusually futile. As there were British troops on the Nile, and Egypt was, theoretically at any rate, financing the expedition, it was found necessary that I should sign vast piles of vouchers submitted by the Staff in Cairo for ultimate transmission to the War Office. Reflecting on the hours which I had to devote to signing what are known as "Nil Returns," documents recording that great-coats had not been issued to various military units, and similar epoch-making announcements, I could only conclude that our machinery was cumbersome and antiquated. Had there been no other urgent work to do, the signing of these vouchers might have served to kill time; but to a busy man burdened with many responsibilities the filling up of negative formulæ was only irritating. Like the saint whose adamantine faith was almost shaken by his inability to discover any use in the order of creation for flies, I could only blindly trust that my signing of these vouchers, which apparently was an indispensable condition of the participation of British troops, contributed in some degree to uphold the British Empire. I notice from my diaries that already at that time I was very critical about atavisms in my own service, and claimed that we ought to have "chancelliers" and professional typewriters, and to reduce the diplomatic staff to the number necessary for more important duties. Many years were however still to pass before this reform was introduced.

The last phase of the Soudan campaign, the advance to Omdurman, had been timed to take



place between the first and second weeks in September. I now learned that a crisis was feared in Lady Cromer's illness, and that my chief's return would be inevitably delayed. So I should have to shoulder the burden and deal with the critical situation which would arise if, as I confidently expected, Captain Marchand were found established on the Nile.

Cairo had assumed a very military aspect. The hotels, generally empty in midsummer, were full of officers. A second British Brigade had been formed and placed under the command of my old friend Brigadier-General Lyttelton. The 1st Grenadier Guards from Gibraltar, the 2nd Rifle Brigade from Malta, the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers, and the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers with a Maxim detachment from the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers stationed at Alexandria, were the composing elements, while as cavalry the 21st Lancers, the popular regiment from Cairo and the most recent unit added to the British army, were to have their first experience of active service. Some of the military authorities inclined to the view that another British battalion should be despatched, and Cromer in England had provisionally agreed. From the Egyptian end I opposed this as unnecessary, and Cromer, when he learned my reasons, expressed his satisfaction that I had done so.

A fourth Egyptian brigade had been formed under Collinson Bey. A portion of his command, half of the 5th Regiment with a company of camel corps, marched across the desert from Suakin to

Berber, covering some 288 miles in fifteen days. The wells on which they had counted at the end of one 30-mile stretch were found to be dry. They had to march on 30 more miles before reaching water, and they did it. Eddy Wortley, whose experience in the first Nile campaign indicated him as the right man for such work, was to lead a force of Arab irregulars consisting largely of remnants of the Jaalin tribe. This unfortunate riverain people had made advances to us when they were ordered by the Khalifa to attack Abou Hamed, and as we were unable to support them their villages were destroyed and the inhabitants were massacred by the Emir Mahmoud. The Egyptian troops moved up the river to Shablouka in steamers and barges, leaving the fort at the mouth of the Atbara for the British, who were despatched up the river with mechanical regularity during the first half of August. K. had a story of a young guardsman who on arriving at the Atbara complained of the length and discomfort of the journey from Cairo. "Seven days," he said, "it has taken us to get here!" "Yes?" replied Bimbashi Watson, always smiling, "it took us two years."

Among the many old friends who turned up to witness the final effort was Frankie Rhodes, once more a free man, after discharging his commuted penalty at Johannesburg, which had been far less a blow to him than the inevitable loss of his commission. His earliest experience of fighting had been upon the Nile, and as he could no longer serve as a British officer he came to witness the taking



of Omdurman as a correspondent of *The Times*. The same old smile played over his wizened face. There was the same twinkle in the blue eye, which was reported to have winked, perhaps unconsciously, when he received his death sentence, an allegation which he always denied, and his unflagging spirits had not been depressed by his grim experience. Hubert Howard also came out as correspondent of *The Times* and the *New York Herald*. He was another of Britain's young knight-errants, who left college to spend his early years in search of adventures of which this was to be the last.

I shall not attempt to recapitulate the story of the march to Omdurman, which I could only follow at the end of the telegraph wire in Cairo a thousand miles away. The concentration of the Anglo-Egyptian force south of Shabluka was complete on the 28th of August, and then we realised that a few days more must bring contact. It will readily be understood how intensified became the feeling of suspense for those of us who had spent two anxious years in preparing for the final event. The knowledge that heavy rains were interrupting communications by the line which was laid along the ground did not lighten our preoccupation. My calculations for the psychological moment indicated the 2nd of September, and all that day we awaited news in tense excitement. Only on the morning of the 3rd messages began to arrive. On the 1st the opposing forces had been within 3 miles of one another, and the gunboats, accompanied by howitzers in barges, were despatched to demolish

the forts on the right bank of the Nile and on Tuti Island. It was not, however, till late on the night of the 3rd that I received in Cairo the news of the capture of Omdurman after the battle which had commenced as anticipated on the morning of the 2nd. The message had been drafted by Kitchener late that evening by the light of one flickering candle.

The first brief reports described how the attack of the Baggara at about 6 a.m., repulsed with a terrible concentration of fire on the advancing masses, was renewed after 10 a.m. with great determination, and the battle had ended with the annihilation of the Dervish army and the occupation of Omdurman in the afternoon. Eddy Wortley with his irregulars had cleared the right bank of the Nile up to Khartoum, and the Jaalin, thirsting for vengeance, had shown a bold front to the Baggaras. Upwards of 60,000 of the enemy were reported killed, 16,000 wounded, and 4,000 taken prisoners. The Khalifa, who had been commanding in person, had fled in the afternoon. The cavalry pursued as soon as his flight became known. They covered some thirty miles. But they had been fifteen hours in the saddle and could go no further.

Our losses were relatively small. Lieutenant Robert Grenfell of the 21st Lancers and Captain Caldecott of the Warwickshires were killed. Frankie Rhodes had been shot through the right shoulder early in the day. The lung was touched. But his undefeated spirit carried him through, and his recovery was accelerated by the joyful news that



his commission had been restored to him. Hubert Howard was struck down by a stray shot or a fragment of shell after the entry into Omdurman, a few yards away from the Mahdi's tomb. I have seldom felt the performance of painful duty more acutely than when I had to break the news to Lord Carlisle, and I bitterly thought of the gentle, kindly artist who as George Howard was associated with my memories of Burne Jones and with happy days in Willie Richmond's studio at Hammersmith, receiving the sad telegram on the Sunday morning. Hubert Howard, the son of a father who was all temperament and a mother whose zeal for reforming the world was carried to bigotry, was born to be a soldier, but circumstance had thwarted that ambition. He sought and found adventure elsewhere, in Cuba and in the Matabele war, and he died, profoundly regretted by very devoted friends, a soldier's death as he would have wished in the hour of triumph.

An echo of Byron's lines after Waterloo came back into our hearts with a pathos of appropriateness :

"They reached no nobler breast than thine, young gallant Howard !"

In filthy Omdurman were found the remaining European prisoners of the Khalifa, Charles Neufeld, the German trader, and Sister Teresa, the nun who had been compelled to marry a Greek.

I have referred to a certain inarticulate sense of imagination in Kitchener. It revealed itself

in the strangely impressive ceremony which he organised on the day following the battle in the ruins of Khartoum. A detachment from every regiment which had been engaged and nearly every officer in the force assembled at the site of the old Palace, and in the deserted garden a memorial service was held at which he made it a special point that the Anglican, the Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian, and the Methodist chaplains should all take part. The British and Egyptian flags were hoisted on the spot where Gordon fell, and a thunder of saluting guns proclaimed that the humiliation of fourteen years earlier was avenged. Mr. Gladstone had died a few months too soon to witness time's revenges.

In Cairo patriots were depressed rather than exhilarated by the news of the overwhelming result of British organisation and perseverance. Among the first messages of congratulation received was one from the ex-Emperor William. At Hanover, where he was attending manoeuvres after the Sunday morning service on the 4th, he harangued his troops under the Waterloo monument, telling them of the capture of Omdurman, and calling for three cheers for the Queen.

Some days passed before letters from K., from Wingate, from Maxwell and from Slatin followed the telegrams, and gave further interesting details. It was generally agreed that in the actual fighting the hero of the day had been Hector Macdonald, a veteran of the Afghan war which had brought him promotion from the ranks, with bitter memories



of Majuba Hill where he was taken prisoner, and an Egyptian record which included Gemaizeh and Toski. His brigade had borne the brunt of the second Dervish attack. The 21st Lancers, thirsting to give their new regiment a historic name, had made a very gallant charge, after having been lured by a deceptive movement of the enemy into a ravine where a large body of Dervishes was concealed, through which they hacked their bloody way with heavy losses in men, and especially in horses. My two particular friends in the regiment, Kenna and de Montmorency, two of the finest horsemen in the British army, had especially distinguished themselves, and both of them were awarded the Victoria Cross for their services. These two gallant officers now only live in the memory of their friends. They would have felt very bitterly the disappearance of the regiment, which they had done so much to make efficient. Kenna had refused promotion elsewhere, and had stuck to the 21st until he was nearly the oldest subaltern in the army. But he died a general. De Montmorency, glorious to look upon, with every gift of charm and accomplishment, fell leading Cape irregulars in South Africa. When his effects were sold by auction in camp, according to the rough uses of war, every button of his tunic fetched a high price, so eager were his troopers to acquire some small personal token to remind them of the leader they loved. My wife had asked Montmorency when he left Cairo to write down for her his impressions of his first battle, while the picture was yet vivid in his mind.

He did so, and sent her a document which has the quick interest of actuality. I have quoted it as an appendix to this chapter.

That so numerous and fanatical a host was crushingly defeated with such small losses on our side—they were smaller than at the Atbara—was mainly due to the forward movement in echelon after the first Dervish attack was broken. The majority of the enemy were cut off from Omdurman, and therefore unable to rally behind their wall. Kitchener risked his rear, which the gunboats could look after, and exposed his flank, upon which, though it was attacked with desperation, he could rely. The all-important thing was that the Dervishes should not be able to interpose the screen of their twenty-foot wall.

Cromer, who was in Scotland, wrote to me expressing his great satisfaction. Lady Cromer had then rallied after a critical stage in her illness. He was for the moment chiefly concerned to bring her back to London, and till that was accomplished could make no plans. As I look back after all these years and reflect on the great difficulties which had had to be surmounted, internal, financial, and diplomatic, only a portion of which have been here set forth, I realise that he had good grounds for satisfaction. With the railway extension as an asset on the credit side this had probably been by far the most economically conducted war in which we had ever been engaged. Success was mainly due to the fact that the fullest reliance had been placed on those on the spot. It had there-



fore been possible to secure the maximum value of the best capacities available for the work in hand. One of the many lessons in statecraft taught by the late Lord Salisbury was that of refraining from injudicious interference with those on whom he had once bestowed his confidence. Cromer's views had prevailed when he insisted that the Sirdar should retain the supreme direction of the campaign, and it was Kitchener's driving power and military-administrative capacity which ensured the conquest of the Soudan.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VI

### LIEUT. REYMOND DE MONTMORENCY'S ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF OMDURMAN

It is 4 a.m. on the 2nd September—the anniversary of the fall of Sedan—and the whole Anglo-Egyptian army is standing to arms waiting for the dawn when, as deserters from the enemy have reported, the Khalifa will make his last and greatest effort to vindicate the divinity of his mission, to save his own life and stem the advance of civilisation.

As day broke the British cavalry reconnoitred the Dervish army that lay  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles S.W. from the zareeba beyond Jebel Surgham ridges. We had been in touch with the Dervish army all the preceding day and had located the exact position of the whole force. So, twenty minutes after leaving the zareeba, our advanced patrols were in touch and reported that the whole of the Khalifa's army, divided into five brigades, each about 10,000 strong, had begun to advance. Our patrols immediately opened fire. But they

were soon driven in on the advanced squadron, which in turn was driven in on the regiment as we retired slowly at a walk towards the Nile, E. of the zareeba, so as to clear the field of fire for our own army. Hardly had our advanced patrols retired over the ridge when a single white flag became visible on it, and the next minute the whole length of Jebel Surgham was seething with a mass of waving banners and spears, and the hoarse Dervish war-cry, "*Allah'l Allah, Khalifa Rasoul Allah,*" rolled ominously over the desert.

At this moment the 32nd Field Battery, R.A., opened fire from the left of the zareeba. Their first shot, range 3,400 yards, was too high, but their next, range 2,700 yards, burst just in front of the advancing mass and down went six Dervishes. From this moment the fire was most accurate and deadly, shrapnel after shrapnel bursting right over the dense masses of the enemy and making great gaps. Shortly afterwards the Gypsy batteries and then the Maxims opened fire, and part of the infantry began firing long-range volleys. I doubt if the latter did much execution as they fired standing with fixed bayonets at a range of over 2,000 yards. Waste of ammunition some thought it, but those who should know best thought otherwise evidently.

The enemy continued to advance at a walk, sauntering along indifferently. But they soon found the terrific fire from the zareeba too much for them and gradually drifted away westward at about 1,700 yards from the zareeba. During this part of the fight we watered our horses in the Nile. The gunboats S.E. of the zareeba also opened fire. But the shooting seemed to be very inaccurate, falling some 1,000 yards from the enemy.

That was all we saw of this phase of the fight, as at 7.30 a.m. we received orders to move south along the river bank and report if the enemy had any large reserves behind Jebel Surgham hill and ridges. When we reached the rising ground 3,000 yards south of the zareeba we were fired at



from the top of Jebel Surgham and also by small bodies of wounded and unwounded enemy returning from the battlefield. About 2,400 yards from the zareeba the dead were lying in heaps of six or seven with a lot of wounded horses and donkeys here and there. We dismounted under a hill 500 yards east of Jebel Surgham and opened fire on the enemy, while two officers patrols under Lieuts. Pirie and Grenfell were sent to report on the enemy to the S.W. of Jebel Surgham. Both these patrols were fired at heavily at a range of under 200 yards, but had no casualties. They reported that several bodies of the enemy were moving S. and S.W. of the ridge, most of them apparently broken, and that there was one body about 1,000 strong 1 mile S. of the Nile.

At 8.45 we received orders from the Sirdar to annoy the enemy's right flank and if possible head them off from Omdurman. We immediately moved S.W. towards the retiring enemy's right flank and our combat patrols reported enemy in front of us—about 600 they thought, but they could not get close enough to report exact numbers. We continued to push on at a walk for another ten minutes, when our combat patrols were driven rapidly back on us and we came under a heavy fire from a body of the enemy 600 yards from our front. Our C.O. immediately moved us to the left in column of troops, so as to take the enemy in flank, when we suddenly again came under the fire of a large body of the enemy hidden in a khor 300 yards on our left flank. Men and horses began to go down under the hail of bullets and there was only one way out of a disaster, and that was to charge home, which we accordingly did. A quarter of an hour afterwards the Dervishes, some 2,000 strong, were in full retreat and we were masters of the khor, they having lost 52 killed in the charge and 20 by our carbine fire. No doubt they had a great number of wounded. Our loss was 1 officer and 20 men killed, 4 officers and 45 men wounded, and 118 horses killed and wounded; a heavy price to pay for victory. But, though this may have

had no immediate effect on the result of the battle, it had a more far-reaching result, because it proved that the British cavalry of to-day is imbued with the same spirit as the British cavalry of the past, and that the formidable Dervish is absolutely no match for the British trooper in a hand-to-hand fight.

I will now endeavour to record what I actually saw myself during this part of the fight. Before we wheeled into line to charge I could see over my right shoulder, about 300 yards away, a dense mass of Dervish footmen pouring a hail of bullets into us. Luckily, as usual, most of them were too high. But it was not comfortable to be riding along slowly in column of troops with the enemy blazing into our right flank, and I found myself calling out: "Why the blazes don't we charge before they shoot us down!" But directly we were wheeled into line and charged a wild feeling of satisfaction came over me with the wish to put my sword into an enemy, and as our pace quickened into a fast gallop a cheer of excitement burst from us, for at last, for the first time in the history of the regiment, we were charging "in earnest" and the prayer of generation upon generation of 21st Lancers was granted. Nothing could have stopped us but absolute complete annihilation.

The Dervishes answered us with fierce hoarse yells of "*Allah'l Allah!*" which drowned our cheers, and some of them actually bounded forward to meet us as if victory was already theirs. They had yet to learn what British cavalry was. As we closed on them I noticed that my squadron leader and second in command were riding with heads down as if against a hailstorm, and found myself doing the same. It was very much like a hailstorm, as the bullets made a continuous "whiz," "whiz," "whiz," with an occasional clink as one hit a sword or a lance-point.

Just before we struck them I saw straight in front of me a khor with rocks on either side filled with a dense mass of Dervishes packed round three flags, yelling defiance,



waving their spears and swords and firing their Remingtons. Amid the smoke and waving arms I could see their upturned faces grinning hate. My charger attempted to incline to his left, but I managed to keep him straight and the next moment he jumped the rocks and I was in the khor and among them. They were as thick as bees and hundreds must have been knocked over by our horses. My charger—a polo pony—behaved magnificently, literally tramping straight through them. He only received a slight spear wound and I got through scot-free, except for a blow from some blunt weapon across my left arm, but the left flap and pocket of my coat were cut through, which let out all my food (biscuits) for the day. Also my sword-scabbard, frog and one rein were cut. The two Dervishes that gave me most trouble as I passed through the khor were: one a fine clean-shaven, light-skinned, well-bred looking swordsman who cut at me with a huge sword, right hand on hilt and left hand on right wrist. I can remember him well, the hissing yell of "Allah" and the ferocious look of hate with which he struck. I parried the blow, but the strength of his cut knocked me half off my horse and as I recovered my seat a coal-black fiend put his rifle straight at my chest. Before he had time to fire I threw myself on to the other side of my horse's neck, and he missed me. At this moment my horse and Private Miller's cannoned at the bottom of the khor and we passed out of it side by side, each of us having thus only one side to defend.

Directly we got through the khor and had gone about 100 yards we halted and faced about, and we then saw that the enemy had begun to retire westward, keeping up a heavy fire on us all the time. We could see the emirs rushing forward and trying to induce them to attack us while we were rallying. But their followers were not for it. They had already had enough of British cavalry.

At this moment I noticed that Private Byrne of my troop was as pale as death and reeling in his saddle from loss of blood. So I told him he might fall out. But he

answered, "No, no, sir. I'm all right. Fall in, No. 2 Troop! Where are the devils?" I was beginning to get annoyed with my troop for not rallying more quickly. I could only find six men. But I soon learned the reason, for one of them called out, "This is all that remains of No. 2 Troop!" So I told them to rally with the rest of the squadron while I went to see if I could find any of my men still alive in the khor. I particularly missed Serjeant Carter, my troop serjeant, a magnificent soldier and very skilful man-at-arms. I knew he would have been with me unless something had happened to him. Making for the khor I met Major Wyndham on foot running in magnificent style with his revolver in his right hand up in the air. One Dervish horseman 40 yards behind was galloping after him with a spear. Directly I rode at this horseman he turned and attempted to make off and so I had to shoot him in the back. Near to and in the khor I passed the bodies of several of our men, terribly mutilated; also many bodies of the enemy, with some wounded as well as unwounded Dervishes who had stayed behind to loot or mutilate, probably both. The sight of our mutilated dead made me "see red" and go for every Dervish I met like a fury. It had the same effect afterwards on our men. I could not find Carter's body, but suddenly I came upon the body of an officer lying face downwards. At first I thought it was Smyth. At that moment I saw Kenna and Corporal Swarbrick riding about near me, so I called them both to the body, and dismounting found it to be Grenfell's, terribly mutilated. As the regiment was now 400 yards away and the enemy, who had begun to advance again firing heavily, were only 200 yards off we determined to bring Grenfell's body away before it could be further mutilated. After a great effort, for a dead man is a terrible weight to lift, I managed to get him on to my horse, which took fright at the unusual burden and plunging forward broke away from us and galloped off. Kenna and Corporal Swarbrick immediately went in pursuit of my horse and, though the enemy was



firing furiously at us and every moment getting closer, they caught him and most gallantly brought him back to me. I made one more effort to get the body on to the horse, but found it impossible to lift quickly, and as we were only three and in a few more moments several hundred Dervishes would be round us there was nothing to do but to retire. So I mounted and we rode off together amid a hail of bullets. There is no doubt that the Dervishes are the worst shots in the world, and not one of them in a hundred could hit a haystack at 50 yards.

As we retired Taylor, who had first rallied his troop, opened fire on the advancing Dervishes. He was soon reinforced by several other dismounted troops. This fire checked the enemy and drove them back again. They retreated westward in confusion. The regiment mounted and advanced slowly after them. So we recovered all our dead and also three of their standards. They left some 72 dead. As they retired they crossed the front of the 2nd British brigade, which we could not see, just coming over the ridges west of Jebel Surgham, and almost at the same moment the 32nd Field Battery, R.A., opened fire at about 2,000 yards range on the confused mass of the enemy. We could see the shrapnel bursting among them, much to our satisfaction, for we didn't bear any feeling of kindness to that black mass that had just mutilated so many of our gallant comrades.

They now retired westward into the great mass of broken enemy who were slowly and sullenly strolling from the battlefield towards Omdurman. In fact as we advanced we found directly across our front a huge stream of defeated Dervishes, several miles long and nearly a mile broad, rolling towards the south-west of Omdurman. The nearest occasionally stopped and sniped at us, and our advanced patrols replied. Hundreds gave themselves up, were disarmed and made to march behind us under escort. Several had to be killed as they fired point-blank at our officers and men while they were being disarmed. We

## 220 SOCIAL AND DIPLOMATIC MEMORIES

continued watching the retreating enemy and making prisoners from 10 till 4 p.m., all which time horses and men were without food or water. At 4 we received orders to water in Khor Shamba. The water there was thick and muddy and strongly flavoured with dead camel, dead donkey, and dead Dervish. But we drank quarts of it all the same and found it most refreshing. At 6 p.m. the 21st Lancers, the Egyptian cavalry and horse artillery set out in pursuit of the Khalifa. But we were too late. He had left Omdurman at 4.30, and we never got within 10 miles of him. His escape was due to one thing only, to there being no one in supreme command of the mounted troops. Instead of one leader they had three, Martin, Broadwood, and Young, all acting independently. At 11 a.m. the mounted troops could easily have gone round to the south-west of Omdurman and cut off the Khalifa's line of retreat. But from 10 a.m. till 6 p.m. the mounted troops did nothing of any use. They were simply wasted.

At 11 p.m., after a fruitless pursuit, we bivouacked without food or water in the desert and in a short time we were all sound asleep. I lay down, helmet and all on, and tied my horse to my wrist, and though he walked about during the night, pulling me after him, I slept like a top. Our sleep was sound for we knew that in our first battle the regiment had behaved in a manner worthy of the traditions of the British cavalry.



## CHAPTER VII

1898

Kitchener finds Captain Marchand at Fashoda. Exchange of views with Paris. K.'s interview with Marchand. *Status quo* pending his report. Marchand comes to Cairo. Antecedents of the issue. The contentions advanced by M. Delcassé, and the British case. Decision of French Government to recall Marchand. Kitchener's return to Cairo and reception in England. Death of Lady Cromer. Departure of Marchand expedition via Abyssinia. Lord Salisbury's treatment of the issue. Lord Curzon at Port Said. Cromer goes to Khartoum.

After issuing the first most necessary instructions for the re-establishment of order Kitchener proceeded up the Nile with a section of gunboats in accordance with instructions from London, which I had transmitted to him at the beginning of August, in anticipation of the fall of Khartoum. Flotillas were to ascend the White and the Blue Niles. The White Nile expedition was to be commanded by the Sirdar in person, and he was to proceed as far as Fashoda. Should either French or Abyssinians be encountered nothing was to be said or done which would in any way imply a recognition on behalf of Her Majesty's Government of a title to possession by France or Abyssinia of any portion of the Nile Valley.

A few days later M. Delcassé, who in the beginning of September had succeeded M. Hanotaux as Minister for Foreign Affairs at Paris, while congratulating Great Britain on the success of our arms, admitted to our Ambassador, Sir Edmund Monson, that if Kitchener's gunboats continued to advance up the Nile it was probable they would fall in before long with Captain Marchand. He described the position of the latter as merely that of "an emissary of civilisation," who had no authority to assume the decision of questions of right, which must be discussed between the two Governments. He expressed the hope that no attempt would be made to settle these questions of right on the spot. The record of this conversation did not, however, reach me until after the Sirdar had actually started up the river. I forwarded it at once, but on the same day a violent storm south of Metemmeh again interrupted all telegraphic connections, and it became impossible for the message to catch him up before his arrival at Fashoda. Almost simultaneously I received a preliminary report from Kitchener announcing that he had ascertained that the French flag was flying there, and that Marchand had taken possession of the old Egyptian station with eight European officers and a force of Senegalese troops.

Lord Salisbury's reply to Sir Edmund Monson's communication was to the effect that if M. Delcassé should revert to the subject he was to point out that all the territories which had been subject to the Khalifa had passed by right of conquest to the



British and Egyptian Governments, and that Her Majesty's Government did not consider that this right was open to discussion.

The expedition to Fashoda occupied a certain time, and I could not receive K.'s despatches, which were being brought down by Lord Edward Cecil, until near the end of the month. The flotilla had for the first time seen something of the Nile Sudd, which K. admitted in his letters was more formidable than he had anticipated and presented a serious problem. The last week of September was spent in a continual interchange of telegrams with the Foreign Office. Meanwhile Sir Edmund Monson had on the 22nd of September, with perfect courtesy and without any suggestion of menacing language, made it clear to M. Delcassé that Her Majesty's Government would not acquiesce in Marchand's remaining at Fashoda, and that on that point no compromise was possible.

On the 25th I was able definitely to confirm that Captain Marchand had with him 120 Senegalese soldiers and a staff of eight officers. Kitchener had announced his approach by letter, and in replying Marchand stated that he had been ordered by his Government to occupy the Bahr-el-Ghazal up to the confluence of the Bahr-el-Jebel, and also the Shilluk country on the left bank of the Nile as far as Fashoda. He had, he continued, concluded a treaty with the Shilluk chiefs placing their lands under the protection of France. Such instructions were not easy to reconcile with the contention repeatedly affirmed in Paris that there was no

Marchand mission, for the latter evidently regarded himself as something more than a mere "emissary of civilisation."

On the Sirdar's arrival Marchand at once came on board his steamer. K. treated him with the utmost courtesy and congratulated him on his remarkable achievement. But he pointed out that the presence of his party in the Nile Valley was an infringement of the rights of Egypt, and he protested against the hoisting of the French flag in the Khedive's dominions. Captain Marchand insisted that he had received precise orders from his Government to hoist the flag and to occupy the official buildings, and maintained that he could not withdraw without orders from his own Government. There was a delicate moment when the Sirdar enquired whether in view of the very superior force by which he was accompanied resistance would be made to the substitution of the Egyptian flag at Fashoda. Marchand replied that they would not of course be able to hold out against such a very superior force, but that they could only do their duty to the flag of France. K. said that he had spoken like a Frenchman, and that the flag should remain where it was until the matter had been determined between the two Governments. The Egyptian flag was then hoisted some five hundred yards south of the French flag. The whole region to the north was an impenetrable marsh. The Fashoda area formed a sort of peninsula surrounded either by swamp or river, and on the neck of dry land connecting it with *terra firma* to the



south a Soudanese battalion under Colonel Jackson established a camp. These preliminaries having been accomplished K. returned north to receive the plaudits and rewards which an appreciative country was preparing for him. As he took his leave of Jackson and his officers, rather cynically expressing the hope that they would enjoy themselves, a terrific tropical downpour descended on the improvised camp in its unattractive surroundings.

Captain Marchand's party had been unsuccessfully attacked by the Dervishes on the 25th of August. He had anticipated a renewed and more serious attack, and had, therefore, sent messengers southwards for reinforcements. The advance on Khartoum, however, made it necessary for the Khalifa to concentrate all his forces at Omdurman and the Dervishes did not return. Marchand appeared to have a fair amount of grain and beans, but he was short of ammunition. Many months must have elapsed before his supplies could have been replenished, and Kitchener was of opinion that had the Soudan expedition and the defeat of the Khalifa been delayed nothing could have saved him and his party from annihilation. That opinion may be contested, but K. never hesitated to affirm that they owed their safety to our timely arrival.

As regards the treaty concluded with the Shilluk tribes which Marchand announced that he had despatched to his Government, all who have had experience of savage Africa know how readily a local headman can be induced to place a seal or mark on a document of the contents of which he

has often only the most shadowy comprehension. In any case the chief of the Shilluk tribe entirely denied having made any treaty with the French, and his people displayed undisguised satisfaction at returning to their old allegiance.

The first encounter on the spot had taken place in accordance with all good traditions of chivalry. Would the French Government now agree to recall Marchand and his party? The attitude of M. Delcassé in regard to the Nile Valley was summed up in the words used in one of his own despatches published in a French Yellow Book: "*Nous demander de l'évacuer préalablement sans discussion, ce serait au fond nous adresser un ultimatum.*" Formally no such procedure was employed, but in reality it was a moral ultimatum to which the French Government eventually yielded. Meanwhile they expressed a desire to receive Marchand's reports before further negotiations took place, and we were directed to forward a telegram instructing him to send one of his officers to Cairo with a copy of his report. It would be, Delcassé maintained, to ask the impossible if we pressed for the recall of their agent before they had had this report, but he was ready to discuss the whole question in the most conciliatory spirit. This request was agreed to. Lord Salisbury did not ask to see the message which we were to transmit, but our Ambassador in Paris was instructed to point out that the transmission did not imply any modification of the view already expressed by Her Majesty's Government that, whether in times of Egyptian or Dervish dominion, the region in



which Captain Marchand was found had never been without an owner ; and that the British Government considered that his expedition into that region with an escort of 100 Senegalese troops had no political effect, nor could any political significance be attached to it. Meanwhile Colonel Jackson remained encamped at a convenient distance.

Eventually Captain Marchand himself came down to Cairo, where he was in direct telegraphic communication with his Government. I did not see him. The situation was obviously a very delicate one, and we felt that the greatest discretion must be observed in our relations with the French Agency during the somewhat protracted period occupied by communications with Paris and subsequent negotiations. Officers who came into contact with him up the river expressed the opinion that he did all that was in his power to facilitate matters and in personal relations was courtesy itself. Every one was, I think, genuinely sorry to feel that after his remarkable achievement in bringing his expedition to the Nile he should have found himself in such a trying position. Criticism of the policy of his Government was not incompatible with a sincere feeling of regard for the officer who had so ably carried out the duty entrusted to him. The ambition, moreover, of France during the epoch of African rivalries to obtain an outlet on the Nile with all its eventual possibilities was easy to understand. Had I been a Frenchman I should have fully shared that ambition, and have been as ready to devote my energies to realising it as circumstances had made

me zealous in contesting what I cannot admit to have been a good claim in right.

Having been myself both in Egypt and in Abyssinia directly concerned with the antecedents of the critical situation which had arisen, I feel entitled to place on record a brief historical summary of an issue which caused grave anxiety at the time and left after its settlement an inevitable sense of soreness in France. Even there, however, expressions of opinion had not been wanting at the time that the policy of continually irritating Great Britain was a mistaken one, and in spite of Fashoda M. Delcassé, who had himself been largely responsible for the enterprise, became not long afterwards one of the warmest advocates of a better understanding, in giving successful effect to which he incurred the undying resentment of Germany.

Events of this nature are apt to be judged by public opinion with regard only for the considerations which obtrude themselves at the moment of crisis, and without adequate appreciation of the conditions anterior to that crisis. At home all parties were united in resenting the entry of the Marchand expedition into the rebellious Nile provinces at the very time when Egypt and Great Britain were engaged in the process of reconquering the Soudan. But the sequence of events which had preceded this action gave it an almost provocative character. It has since more than once been suggested to me in other countries that our attitude was intransigent. It could not have been other than firm in view of



our repeated public and official announcements that we did not regard the question of the Upper Nile as open to discussion.

The record of the controversy summarised in the following pages is based upon published documents. Personal experiences in Africa covering the three or four years anterior to this historic episode justify my attempting to deal with the merits of an issue which it is difficult to appreciate in all its bearings without intimate knowledge of African affairs in the 'nineties.

The case for the rights of Great Britain and Egypt in the Nile Valley was a strong one, and it was in no way shaken by the French Government's vindication of policy. The promulgation of the Anglo-German agreement of July, 1890, had constituted a public notification of what we regarded as our sphere of influence in East Africa. M. Delcassé maintained that France had never recognised the Anglo-German convention. But the French Government had at the time of its publication and communication to the Powers protested that certain French interests would be violated by the establishment of a Protectorate over Zanzibar which Germany had agreed to recognise. The validity of the French protest was admitted, and this issue was eventually determined by our recognition of a French Protectorate over Madagascar and the hinterland of Algeria. If France preserved silence as regards the remaining dispositions of the convention and confined her protest to this single point, the assumption on our part that she

accepted the other provisions was surely justified.

Nevertheless, within a few months of the promulgation of the Anglo-German agreement in 1890, M. de Brazza, the Commissioner-General of the French Congo, despatched a mission under M. Liotard to secure the Upper Ubanghi against movements from the Congo State, with instructions to establish "*une région française ayant une porte ouverte sur le Nil.*" We, of course, could then only conjecture the precise nature of his instructions, but any doubt as to how far the suspicions which we entertained at the time were justified was subsequently dissipated by a speech made in 1898 by M. Liotard himself, and published on the 7th of October by the *Temps*, in which he made this admission.

The British sphere was once again defined in the Anglo-Italian agreement of March, 1891. Then followed our treaty with the Congo Free State of May, 1894, to which reference has been made in my previous volume. By this instrument Great Britain agreed to a lease to the Congo State of certain territories in the Anglo-Egyptian sphere, the extent of which was plainly indicated in the map annexed. Belgian officers were at that time advancing on the Upper Ubanghi, and in actual occupation of certain posts in the Bahr-el-Ghazal region. M. Hanotaux, who was then Minister for Foreign Affairs at Paris, brought pressure to bear on King Leopold to renounce the lease, and a military expedition was organised by M. Delcassé, as Minister of the Colonies, under



Colonel Monteil, to expel the Belgians if necessary. King Leopold gave way, and the Belgian officers were withdrawn from the Upper Ubanghi, which was detached from the French Congo and constituted a separate administration. The Monteil expedition, nevertheless, remained on an active footing, and a second expedition followed under M. Liotard with instructions which were not made public. The real object of these missions was revealed some four years afterwards in an open letter addressed to Delcassé by Prince Henry of Orleans, and published in the *Temps* on the 21st of November, 1898. He wrote: "In 1894 Colonel Monteil, placed at the head of an expedition which would advance from the Congo to the White Nile, has asked the Government to give me (Prince Henry) a mission to rejoin him through Abyssinia. The occupation of Fashoda by French forces from the eastern and western sides of Africa was to be our objective." That the intention existed as early as 1894 of giving the French Congo an issue on the Nile was moreover admitted by M. Delcassé in a despatch to the French Ambassador in London, which was published in the Yellow Book of 1898.

After the treaty concluded between France and the Congo State had rendered negative the provisions of the Anglo-Congolese agreement, Her Majesty's Government endeavoured to come to terms with the French Government directly, and the British Ambassador at Paris arranged with M. Hanotaux for a discussion which contemplated the adjustment of a number of African issues be-

tween the two Governments, and should also include the question of the Nile. The French Government agreed to the preliminary condition put forward on our side that, pending this discussion, Colonel Monteil should be recalled. They did not, however, seem to have considered that the withdrawal of Monteil connoted also a suspension of the activities of M. Liotard, who was actually on his way to the Bahr-el-Ghazal to anticipate any negotiations by a *fait accompli*. So serious did the situation thus created appear to Lord Rosebery's Government that Sir Edward Grey, then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs declared in Parliament in March, 1895, that any invasion of the Nile Valley would be regarded by Great Britain as an unfriendly act. When Lord Salisbury replaced Lord Rosebery as Prime Minister in the following year this warning was repeated by Mr. Curzon as Under-Secretary in the place of Sir Edward Grey. Once more in December, 1897, a note addressed by Sir Edmund Monson in Paris to M. Hanotaux allowed no doubt to exist that Lord Salisbury adhered to the position adopted by his predecessor in office. Our attitude had thus been defined with unmistakable clearness.

M. Delcassé, in defending French policy in 1898, had gone so far as to contend in a communication<sup>1</sup> to Sir Edmund Monson that there had been no Marchand mission. Captain Marchand, in carrying out his duty of relieving time-expired troops and occupying regions recognised as in the French

<sup>1</sup> *Affaires du Haut Nil*. Desp. No. 7 (1898).



sphere by the Franco-Congolese Treaty, was, he said, simply acting as the subordinate of M. Liotard, and it had been himself who, as Minister of the Colonies, had entrusted M. Liotard with his mission in 1893, a date long anterior to Sir Edward Grey's declaration. As a matter of fact M. Delcassé did not become Minister of the Colonies until 1894, and it was in that year, and not in 1893, that the Liotard expedition was despatched. In 1893 Delcassé was only Under-Secretary of State. The error of date was no doubt a slip. But it was unfortunate that such an error should seem to give greater force to his insistence on "*une date bien antérieure*" to Sir E. Grey's declaration. The question of what Liotard's instructions really were was evaded. No doubt, however, on this point is left by subsequent disclosures, including the admission of M. Liotard himself, to which I have already referred, in a speech published in the *Temps* of October 7, 1898, in which he stated that the mission entrusted to him by M. Delcassé in 1894 had the same object as that which had been confided to him by M. de Brazza in 1890, and contemplated an open door to the Nile. In any case M. Liotard did not actually cross the old Egyptian frontier until February, 1896, nearly a year after Sir E. Grey's warning note, so that there would have been ample time to revise his instructions.

M. Delcassé's contention that there was no Marchand mission could hardly be seriously accepted. No doubt when in January, 1896, Marchand was appointed to the Upper Ubanghi it was only as an

officer under M. Liotard's administrative control. But he did not actually leave France until many months later, and when he started in the following June the Soudan campaign had already been initiated in despite of every effort France could make to prevent the Commissioners of the Debt in Egypt from according the necessary funds. From the French point of view a new situation had thus arisen, which might compromise the project of connecting the Congo Colony with the Nile. Captain Marchand was then appointed commander of the military forces in the Ubanghi area, and he took out with him, in addition to a considerable staff, two river gunboats and sufficient equipment and supplies for a long period of African penetration. Moreover, as soon as M. Hanotaux succeeded M. Berthelot at the Quai d'Orsay in 1896, steps were taken to organise expeditions through Abyssinia to join hands from the east with Marchand advancing from the west to the Nile.

When our decision to advance to Dongola was adopted in 1896, the French Government had urged upon the Porte that the Sultan should assert his authority as Suzerain of Egypt, and that no steps should be sanctioned without the concurrence of France and Russia.<sup>1</sup> The sovereignty of the Sultan and the rights of the Khedive had indeed for a certain number of years constituted the stock argument invoked by the French Government in order to preserve the Equatorial provinces of the Nile from trespass by others. M. Hanotaux in

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III, p. 92.



1892 had made them a pretext for rejecting a proposal from the Congo Free State for a division of the Bahr-el-Ghazal. The rights of the Sultan and of Egypt had been duly reserved in the Anglo-Congolese Treaty of 1894. They were nevertheless to serve as the chief argument for the invalidation of that instrument in a memorandum submitted in London by the French Ambassador in August of that year. The Khedivial Government had, it was maintained, never ceased to declare its desire to re-establish authority there, and "it was useless to pretend that the sovereignty of the Sultan and of the Khedive was not infringed" even though a perfunctory recognition of their rights was contained in the agreement. This contention was repeated by M. Hanotaux in a speech in the Senate in 1895. And yet at the very moment when the rights of Turkey and Egypt were being insistently advocated by the French Foreign Office, M. Delcassé, at the Ministry of the Colonies was organising an expedition the object of which was "*de donner à notre colonie du Congo une issue sur le Nil*," as he himself admitted in a despatch addressed to Baron de Courcel, the French Ambassador in London, which appeared in the Yellow Book.

Nor did inconsistency end there. As soon as it was known in France that Marchand had occupied Fashoda the Sultan's sovereignty and the Khedive's rights, which had served their purpose, were conveniently dropped. Nay, those very rights of Egypt were called in question when it suited the French Government to contend that the Upper

Nile was no man's land, and therefore open to French occupation. It is true that this contention was only advanced after M. Delcassé, who had certainly been consistent in his aims, had taken the place of M. Hanotaux at the Foreign Office. Though both spoke in the name of the French Government, Delcassé did not hesitate to reverse the arguments of his predecessor in office. M. de Courcel, who was presumably acting on instructions, reported that he had used the following language to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: "I enquired of Lord Salisbury whether he did not consider that it was going rather far to vindicate on behalf of Egypt alone the privilege of maintaining in perpetuity her rights over territories which had once belonged to her, disregarding all the transformations resulting from conquests and revolutions. I added that so far as the Bahr-el-Ghazal region was concerned it had been under Egyptian domination at most for three or four years, and this was not much on which to base the plea of inalienable legitimate possession which it was sought to sustain against us." The rights of Egypt and the Sultan which had been invoked by France to warn off others, which had been held sufficient to justify a practical ultimatum to the Congo Free State, were not to be invoked against France herself. We, however, had no option but to defend a claim, any concession in regard to which would have been disastrous to our future position in Africa.

The controversy regarding Fashoda, with the



successive phases, of which personal experience made me familiar, is in some respects typical of the old diplomacy and the expedients to which it resorted. We in Cairo took a certain amount of credit to ourselves for the accuracy of the information which had throughout been supplied to our Government and the deductions drawn from it. This information had fully justified the despatch of the mission to Abyssinia, the real importance of which was probably not understood at the time. The eventual confirmation of our deductions was not a little due to the indiscretions of some of the principal actors which have been quoted, and to documents which were perhaps inadvertently included in published official papers. Incidentally these revelations showed how fortunate had been the policy adopted for quite other reasons, of initiating the advance into the Soudan in 1896.

Some weeks were yet to elapse before the settlement, when the French Government decided not to press their case and to recall Captain Marchand. The decision when it came was a great relief, and we could feel that if we had had a long and bitter quarrel it was time to be friends once more. The episode belonged to an epoch which is happily passed. Between Great Britain and France there are no more African rivalries, and the hatchet has been buried with all goodwill, thanks not a little to M. Delcassé himself, whose recent death was regretted no less sincerely at home than it was in his own country. The real facts of the case were perhaps never fully understood in either of the

countries concerned by the mass of the public, who only regarded the elements of controversy obvious at the moment of crisis. It may, therefore, serve a useful purpose to have reconstructed the situation historically as those of us who were most directly interested saw it, and a recapitulation of the story from our point of view, I hope without prejudice, may help at this distance of time to reveal to our friends in France why we felt so strongly on the subject. It is only in that spirit that I have recalled it.

In any case with Captain Marchand himself there had been no quarrel, and there was no one in Egypt who was not sincerely pleased to hear of his well-deserved promotion. The French officers who serve their country in Africa are a corps of the *élite*, whose achievements and personal qualities have won for them the admiration of my countrymen. As I set down these words a letter was placed in my hand from my son, actually travelling in the French Niger territories. From Agades he wrote that his party were staying in the Fort, the guests of the French who were as usual charming, and he added, "Whatever relations in Europe may be, here they could not be improved."

The summer of 1898 had been a particularly severe one in Egypt, and that year the great heat lasted on well into the middle of October. A succession of khamsin winds at the end of September made even the nights unendurable. The strain and anxiety of responsibility during the last weeks had been constant, and for a day or two



I was put out of action with fever and an ulcerated throat. At that moment the Cromers returned. An apparent improvement in Lady Cromer's condition had enabled them to undertake the journey back to Egypt, as she ardently desired. It was perhaps the last act of sacrifice of her singularly unselfish and devoted life that she insisted on making the effort without allowing her husband to perceive her real anxiety not to keep him any longer away from his work. There had been a bad moment when the sea was rough, but otherwise the risk of the journey was successfully surmounted.

During my momentary inaction I occupied myself with the examination of some Byron relics which Surgeon-General Muir was good enough to lend me. His father Surgeon-Major-General Henry Muir had been principal medical officer at Argostoli when Byron came to Cephalonia in the *Hercules*, and he lived some twenty years in the island. The notes of his conversations with the poet, which I then read for the first time, have now been published in the *Letters and Journals*,<sup>1</sup> as also have the letters contained in his collection, the gem of which was a portrait of Byron in a cap and frogged military coat by d'Orsay. Richness of experience does not seem to have increased his esteem for the women who had played such a large part in his life before he took up the cause of Greece. He observed that he was not surprised that they did not like Don Juan: "They could not bear it because it took

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Lord Byron. Letters and Journals.* Vol. VI. Appendix VI. John Murray (1904).

off the veil and showed that all their damned sentiment was only an excuse to cover passions of a grosser nature." Perhaps he only found what he sought, but I wished he had not said it.

On the 6th of October Kitchener came down to Cairo. His journey from Khartoum, which a month earlier was still out of the reach of civilisation, had only taken seventy-four hours.

He had received none of the messages of congratulation or learned the announcement of his peerage when he started up the river to Fashoda. I gathered from him that he had had enough of the Soudan, and did not particularly desire to go back if anything else were to be offered him. About a fortnight later he went to England, where he had a wonderful reception. His scheme for the Gordon College was taken up with enthusiasm. There was a rugged directness in the manner in which he demanded contributions from those that he believed could afford them, and he did not hesitate to indicate the amount which he considered appropriate to the donor's financial position.

The excessive heat during this October of 1898 undoubtedly accelerated a fatal crisis in Lady Cromer's illness. On the 12th she began to show signs of collapse, and a day or two later was unable to receive any nourishment. During the first few days of this painful period Cromer held out manfully, but the suspense told upon him and he could not get any sleep. The strong man became gentle as a child, and as it seemed to help him to talk to us, I remained with Boyle at the Agency all day and



late into the night. She lived on till the afternoon of the 16th. Father Brindle, the much-beloved Catholic chaplain, who had gone up with the army to Khartoum and had earned the regard of men of every creed, came in the afternoon and told me he would like to say the prayers for the dying. I found Cromer, who took him to the room, and he had just concluded the last prayer when she passed away. At this grave moment I am glad to think that he had all the affection and sympathy which we could give him and every assistance in the last offices of piety. It was touching to realise how much he appreciated the little we could do for him. Her death was deeply felt by many, and not least by Kitchener, who at this time revealed that human side which he seldom allowed others to see. Cromer, broken by his loss, was a very pathetic figure to me in those days. But he carried on, working still harder than before, and I liked to think that for him the consolation of literature was not an empty phrase.

It was not until the 14th of November that Major Marchand left Cairo with definite instructions to evacuate the position at Fashoda. About the same time the news reached us that Major Martyr had descended the Nile from the Lakes as far as Lado and returned thence to Dufle. He had only started in August. That he should have been able to cover the distance in so short a time seemed to indicate that our idea of anticipating Marchand by pushing forward from the Uganda end had not been altogether fantastic.

It had been decided that the French expedition should return through Abyssinia. A letter from Maxwell, who accompanied it up the Sobat as far as the junction of the Jubba, described the departure of the flotilla on the 11th of December. Their equipment seemed very modest in view of all they had accomplished when compared with the powerful gunboats which were now patrolling the Nile. But the smaller craft had been able to penetrate where bigger steamers could not pass, and they were perfectly adapted for work in the Bahr-el-Ghazal. Fortunately there were no Abyssinians on the Nile, and I could congratulate myself on the decision taken at Addis Abbaba to postpone any discussion of frontiers on this side until after we had re-occupied the river basin.

Once in Abyssinian territory Marchand would have no further serious difficulties, and he could claim with pride that he had crossed Africa from west to east by a route never before attempted. A final small act of courtesy gave, I believe, real gratification to that gallant officer. The 11th Soudanese presented him with the flag of the Dervish Emir who had fought against him at Fashoda. They had taken it at the battle of Omdurman.

Lord Salisbury gained great credit for his firm attitude at this time, and the Foreign Department, which had been subjected to much criticism for its policy in China and elsewhere, recovered prestige. He had inherited a number of unsettled and difficult issues when he became Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1895, not the least troublesome of which was the



secular boundary dispute between British Guiana and Venezuela. The claim advanced in Congress by President Cleveland, that the United States should become a party to the issue under a widened interpretation of the Monroe doctrine, found ready acceptance in Great Britain, and the boundary question was regulated by arbitration in a manner which we had no reason to regret. Looking back over the years which preceded Fashoda I presume that Lord Salisbury had long been preoccupied by the probability of a serious crisis arising on the Upper Nile. Since the summer of 1897 he could have had little doubt that without immediate steps to anticipate the French expedition it would reach the debatable region first. He therefore no doubt desired to keep his hands as free as possible. His attitude towards Germany consequently became more conciliatory, and it was difficult for him to take a stronger line regarding the situation in China in negotiations with Russia without knowing how far her obligations to her French ally involved support in African questions. With all the information at his command he had, it must be assumed, weighed every consideration and then decided to let things take their course. Any other action would have entailed considerable expenditure, not easy to justify to Parliament without explanations which it would have been inopportune to give. No doubt every credit must be ascribed to him for his firmness when the issue did arise. But at the time some of us who had been closely watching these developments remained unconvinced that we might not

have avoided an undesirable crisis either by a timely movement from Uganda, very difficult but not necessarily impossible, or by pressing on to Khartoum immediately after the battle of the Atbara. At the same time it must be admitted that we should in any case have found sections of the Bahr-el-Ghazal occupied, and, without the interposition of the Fashoda episode, a settlement of the territorial question in that province might have ended in compromise.

Just before Christmas I went to Port Said to see the Viceroy elect, now Lord Curzon, passing through on his way to India. Another old Balliol friend, Sir Walter Lawrence, was with him. We had an afternoon together, and dined with the Royles at the hospitable agency of the P. & O. Company. As he had just left the Foreign Office, where he had made the position of parliamentary Under-Secretary a more vital element in the department than it had ever been before, we had much to discuss. The long-standing Cretan question, which had occupied much of my time and thought some ten years earlier, was more or less resolved. The questions arising out of the Spanish-American War had, however, not yet received settlement. Finally there was all that had been happening in Egypt.

At the end of the year Sir Francis Grenfell was appointed Governor of Malta, and his command in Egypt thus only just outlasted the Soudan War. I presided over a farewell banquet in his honour, at which a pleasant feature was the presence of the American representative, Colonel Harrison, whose



speech emphasising the needs of Anglo-Saxon friendship was received with enthusiasm. He was succeeded by Sir Reginald Talbot, who had been military attaché at Paris during my sojourn at the Embassy. He and Lady Talbot became our neighbours, and it was a great pleasure to be serving together again at the same post. Some twenty years earlier, while I was still an undergraduate at Oxford, a girl's face which satisfied all the canons of the rarest English beauty had distracted my attention from a tedious sermon in a continental church. It was destined not long after to become familiar, and has remained so throughout the friendship of a lifetime which has left that beauty unimpaired. We had now two Sir Reginalds in Cairo, and in a short time the other one, Wingate, was to command the Egyptian Army as Sirdar.

Christmas was at hand. The family festival had always been a great event at the Agency, and this year it presented a difficult problem. The Baring boys and their cousin, now Lady Granville, were arriving and we felt that it would be melancholy for them to celebrate it alone in a house of mourning. My wife persuaded Cromer to come himself and bring them to dinner at our house, where only the staff would be present. But we dreaded the moment of his arrival and the first words to be said on such an occasion. Then my wife had a brilliant inspiration. Our little boy Francis was now three and a half years old and an extraordinarily winning child of whom Cromer was very fond. Instead of being put to bed at the normal hour he was left sitting in

an arm-chair alone in the drawing-room till their arrival, dressed in his pink pyjamas. The rest of us were all in the plot to be rather late and allow the child to receive him. When we all came in a minute or two later we found Cromer quite content with the boy sitting on his knee, pulling up his small pyjamas and observing "much hair on leg." The ice was broken, as it always is when "a little child shall lead them."

Four days afterwards Cromer started for Khartoum, accompanied by Boyle and Arthur Stanley. In the four months which had passed since the battle of Omdurman the people had already learned to appreciate the advantages of the ordered and equitable administration which had replaced the odious tyranny of the Mahdi and the Khalifa, and he had a great reception. His address to the elders and notables, specially designed to appeal to such an audience, was translated sentence by sentence into Arabic by Boyle as he spoke, a very remarkable performance. And so ended this eventful year.



## CHAPTER VIII

1899-1900

Kitchener as Governor-General of Soudan. Differences with Cairo. Death of Nubar Pasha. Visit to England. The Derby with Lord C. Beresford. Captain Wellby. His travels in Equatorial Africa. His dogs. Wingate's expedition against the Khalifa. The fight at Gedir and death of the Khalifa. The Boer War. Our universal unpopularity. Greek sympathies in Egypt. Soudan-Eritrean frontier settlement in Rome. Lord and Lady Currie. K. ordered to South Africa. Wingate becomes Sirdar. Critical situation in Soudan. Osman Digna captured. Alfred Paget. Visit to Khartoum. Two nights in the desert. Wingate's achievement as Governor-General. The Khedive's visit to England. Sir M. Hicks Beach and the Soudan Budget.

Kitchener had found himself a popular hero after his successful conduct of the Khartoum campaign and the subsequent negotiations. There was no danger that that very level head would be turned. The danger was rather that when once he felt his ground secure the arbitrary side of his temperament would assert itself. My sincere regard for the memory of an old friend to whose vision and driving power my country in its grimmest hour owed an immeasurable debt would naturally predispose me to refrain from criticising him. But the real Kitchener was a much more interesting human study than the Kitchener of popular imagination, and the medal of the Nile had its reverse.

In the beginning of 1899 the Soudan problem, in any case a difficult one, became still more difficult to control owing to those idiosyncrasies of his secretive character and the inveterate habit of not placing his cards on the table with perfect frankness to which I have alluded in a previous chapter. In so far as his purely military budgets were concerned he had been allowed to deal with the lump sum assigned very much as he pleased, and though it may be doubted whether he was really a good financier his economies had been masterly. The same latitude could hardly be accorded in regard to the Soudan budget. But in his new position as Governor-General he began to resent any interference, and he used to complain quite unjustifiably of the attitude of Gorst, who as Under-Secretary for Finance had to exercise supervision over expenditure. The Soudan was bound to impose a heavy burden on Egypt. The £350,000 assigned to its administration as an annual subvention was barely adequate, and in Egypt itself financial stringency was to be anticipated. Had it been possible, as originally contemplated, to have postponed the reconquest of the Soudan until after the construction of the Nile reservoirs this anxiety would not have been felt. But though the reservoirs might not be completed within the estimated period, payment would begin in four years' time. Experience showed us that K.'s acceptance of a financial programme elaborated in Cairo did not prevent instructions to the military staff at the Egyptian War Office which were not always consistent with it.



At this time moreover discontent manifested itself among the Egyptian officers serving in the Soudan. As such a spirit was sedulously fostered by the nationalist Press, and believed to be encouraged by the Khedive, it was important to avoid giving any pretext for it. Unfortunately there was some justification for this discontent. K. had chosen a moment when the pay of the British officers in the Egyptian Army was being raised to cut off the field allowance of the native officers, notwithstanding that provision had been made for this expenditure in the estimates, in order to increase balances available for other purposes, and this without reference to the Agency. The revocation of his order could not fail to have an unfortunate effect, but to have left it in force would have been more unfortunate still. I was not in Cairo at the moment when this difference of opinion arose. Cromer used to write to me very fully during my absence on leave. His letter on this occasion is characteristic of the difference between the two men. He wrote : " You know how secretive the Sirdar is. He does not tell me anything, and I am not confident he knows much about it himself. He terrorises all his people and does not encourage them to speak the truth. — A Moslem army ; Christian officers ; the blacks capricious and almost savage ; the fellahs loathing service in the Soudan ; the Khedive, to say the least, foolish ; the native and French Press doing all they can to encourage discontent ; the older and more experienced English officers getting promoted ; these facts are quite

enough for me. — I do not think that Kitchener at all appreciated the danger. Hence I insisted on giving back the field allowances. Kitchener tells me I was wrong, but I do not agree with him. It instantly put a stop to all the agitation *here*. — Kitchener must remember he has to deal with human beings and not with blocks of wood and stone.”

A certain reaction also began now to be perceptible against the adulation which had been offered the Sirdar after the close of the campaign. An expedition sent in pursuit of the Khalifa led to no result. He had placed his brother in command over the heads of Maxwell and Macdonald, a selection which it was difficult to justify. The suppression in the despatch indicating meritorious services of the report of the officer commanding at Kassala, who in the opinion of competent judges had done very well with a quite inadequate force, had had for its consequence the omission of that officer's name in the list of those publicly thanked by Parliament after the battle of Omdurman. Being in England at the time and resenting what I felt was an injustice, I obtained full authority from Cromer to place the facts before a higher authority, and the officer in question was immediately recommended for an exceptional distinction. A number of the senior British officers were now leaving Egypt, and the Sirdar made it a grievance that they did not show more devotion to him and sacrifice their own careers by remaining.

Finally he was attacked in Parliament for the



destruction of the Mahdi's tomb and the disinterment of the body. Here K. showed generosity in taking on himself all the responsibility for the manner in which the operation was carried out. In view of the local conditions and the danger which then still existed of a recrudescence of fanaticism in the Soudan he was probably right in suppressing everything which tended to perpetuate the cult of a Mahdism repudiated by all sound Moslem opinion and authority. But the circumstances of the case appealed to a certain form of sentimentality at home, and incidentally they offered a promising opportunity for an attack on the Government. I was present in the House of Commons when Mr. Morley (Viscount Morley) opened the debate with a speech which did not seem to me one of his happiest efforts. K. was in the Peers' gallery with Lord Roberts, and his face was an interesting study.

During this rather difficult stage Cromer displayed great forbearance, and I did not think K. showed sufficient appreciation of the debt he owed him. There could only be one King in Brentford and there was no doubt who that was to be. He was no doubt overworked and depressed, probably more than he would have admitted even to himself, by criticism in Parliament. The defects, which I trust I have not overstated, of his great qualities in no way detract from the measure of the man in normal conditions. It was not easy for him, having once emerged and being constituted as he was, to play a second part. It was therefore in many ways

fortunate that before the end of the year his invaluable activity was required elsewhere.

In January, 1899, Nubar Pasha died in Paris, where he had long been lying ill. The reconquest of the Soudan had brightened his latter days, for he was one of the few who had known Khartoum before the Mahdist rebellion, when his brother was governor of the Equatorial provinces. He died as he had lived, proud of his contribution to the progress of Egypt, the establishment of the Mixed Tribunals and the inauguration of an impartial judicial system. In announcing his death the correspondent of *The Times* at Paris quoted some words which Nubar had made use of not long before, when discussing the failure of the European Powers to solve the Turkish problem. The only way to cure the chronic Oriental malady was to adopt a policy of justice for which they had substituted the policy of interest. "When," he said, "you have given the Turks not only justice, but the sense of justice, you will have saved both Europe and Turkey."

The lease of our house had expired and we had taken Sir William Garstin's house for the winter, while he was absent on the Upper Nile inspecting and reporting on the conditions of the Sudd. There our eldest daughter was born on the 18th of March. By a curious coincidence both her godfather, Lord Cromer, and her godmother, Lady Grenfell, had the same Christian name. It was therefore obvious that she must be called Evelyn. At the end of April we departed for our annual leave.



On the Queen's birthday I received to my great surprise a letter from Lord Salisbury announcing that he had recommended me for the K.C.M.G. for services especially in Egypt. As I realised that this honour must have been conferred at the suggestion of Lord Cromer, it was really gratifying to me. In the same Gazette appeared the name of Mr. Ernest Cassel, who received a similar distinction.

Another event of this leave season was my first Derby, which I witnessed from Charlie Beresford's coach. We drove over from his house at Ham, where there was a very merry party, including that splendid veteran of the sea, Sir Michael Culme-Seymour. Every one on the course seemed to know Charlie Beresford, who picked up a party of young Australians paying their first visit to England and brought them to lunch at the coach. He had the happy knack of doing the right thing genially, and was at home in every country, with a smiling face which interpreted the universal language of humanity. He was a great imperial asset.

During the summer which we spent at Ramleh there arrived down the Nile from the heart of the African continent Captain Wellby of the 18th Hussars, who starting through Abyssinia had made a very remarkable journey, eventually reaching the river viâ Lake Rudolph. He brought the first reliable information available regarding the Turkhanas, a curious race of giants who add to their already exceptional stature by piling the hair caked with clay in masses on the top of their heads. Wellby, whose previous experiences as a traveller

had been in Asia, quiet, modest and resourceful, had all the qualifications of a great explorer, not the least of which was his sympathy with and understanding of native races. His conspicuous contribution to our knowledge of Africa at that time is recorded in a very interesting book,<sup>1</sup> which was only published after his sad death in South Africa, where I was told that the Boer who had wounded him cared for him afterwards until he died as though he had been his own son. This did not surprise me; there was a singular charm in that unassuming young soldier, who had made such good use of his brief life.

Throughout his wanderings he had been accompanied by a fox-terrier of extraordinary intelligence. So human in her instinct was the little "Lady" that even Moslems in Africa to whom the dog is by tradition unclean regarded her as an exception to all rules. She was not really a dog, they said, but an *afrit* or spirit, and they became as attached to her as was her master. In Abyssinia there had been a *mésalliance* with an Abyssinian greyhound, and the result was a puppy who had reverted to the type of the primitive yellow dog, but developed remarkable character. As Wellby was uncertain of his future movements, but hoped eventually to return to Egypt, Lady was left with me and soon settled down in her new surroundings after the first day or two of perplexity. Baird meanwhile took charge of the yellow dog with the long legs. Wellby, after spending a day or two with us, left for home,

<sup>1</sup> *'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik*. Fisher Unwin.



whence he was ordered to South Africa, and to my great regret I never saw him again. He left the memory of a singularly winning personality.

In the early autumn Kitchener contemplated a further attempt to deal with the Khalifa, whose position had now been ascertained. He was being shadowed by a friendly chief, who was however not strong enough to attack him without support. What remained of the Dervish army with the Khalifa was quite demoralised, but there was always the fear that discontented elements would rally round him. Kitchener wrote to me from Khartoum on the 11th September that a menace of trouble in Senaar had been repressed by prompt action, but that it had revealed that the Khalifa was still a danger so long as he remained at large. Wingate was entrusted with the command of a flying column which was despatched to look for him, and the little campaign was admirably conceived and carried out. The 9th and 13th Soudanese, with one squadron of cavalry, 250 camel corps, 1,000 irregulars, six field guns, and six maxims, concentrated on the west bank of the Nile, some 180 miles south of Omdurman. After a night march they encountered and broke up a foraging force under Ahmed Fedil, capturing all the raided grain. They pressed on through a second night to a short distance from the Khalifa's camp, which had been definitely "located" at a place called Gedid. Then, after a rest, they started to march in the dark through thick bush to the spot where the last act of the long-drawn-out drama of Mahdism was to end. The Dervish

leaders displayed the old defiant spirit and disregard of death, attempting a last forlorn rush to reach their enemy. But nothing could live under the fire concentrated on them in the half-light of dawn, and the Khalifa, with Ahmed Fedil, Wad Helu, and the bodyguard of Emirs killed to a man, were all found lying in a heap together. The remainder of the force, with all the women and children, surrendered. The only leader of importance who for the moment escaped was the ever-elusive Osman Digna. The whole of the Soudan was now open.

Wingate sent me the photographs, taken on the battlefield, of the bodies of the Khalifa and his emirs lying where they fell, the arms outstretched, the features calmly set, and their dark, bearded faces and bald foreheads gleaming like bronze in the African sun. Colonel Mahon stands by them with his unfailing pipe between his lips. It was historically appropriate that Wingate, the quiet, indefatigable brain of the Egyptian army, should have given the *coup de grace* to the tyrant of Omdurman.

The year 1899 was an eventful one. But I was in no way concerned with the circumstances which made it so. The extraordinary Dreyfus case absorbed the interest of Europe for a season. Then came the South African War, which soldiers such as old Hector Macdonald, in whose hearts the memory burned, regarded as the penalty for our surrender after Majuba Hill in 1884. It is interesting to reflect how differently such episodes can be judged by different mentalities. I remember an old Italian statesman telling me how deeply Mr. Gladstone's



decision on that occasion had impressed him with the power and greatness of Britain. No other European nation, he said, could have afforded to be so magnanimous after defeat. That we had been able thus to act was a convincing demonstration to the world of our strength. His critics at home, on the other hand, were rather disposed to attribute Gladstone's magnanimity, of the ideal character of which he no doubt ended by convincing himself, to the fact that John Bright had threatened to leave the Government if peace were not signed forthwith.

My diaries at the end of that year are clouded with deep depression as disaster after disaster had to be chronicled. Living in an international milieu in Egypt, we were impressed by the extraordinary unpopularity of our cause with almost every nation in Europe. There were few outside the Empire who were curious to consider the long evolution of an issue of which Sir Bartle Frere had written as long before as 1879: "The trial of strength will be forced upon you, and neither justice nor humanity will be served by postponing the trial." It was the universally accepted doctrine that British Imperialism had determined to crush and absorb a small and gallant people seeking to maintain their national existence and independence. In some countries, and among these Italy, always anxious to be friendly, the language of the press, which was almost universally in favour of the Boers, displayed a certain becoming restraint. But this was rather the exception than the rule, and the extremist free-lances of French journalism in the

year after Fashoda could find no language strong enough to denounce the nation which M. de Cassagnac in the *Autorité* described as "*le peuple le plus scélérat qui soit au monde.*" M. Edouard Drumont in his *Libre Parole* referred to "*les goddam fanfarons du General White,*" while the deputy, M. Lucien Millevoye of the *Comité d'Egypte*, in *La Patrie* thus invited volunteers for the Transvaal: "*L'heure des représailles est venue. La chasse aux Anglais est ouverte. Avis aux amateurs! Le sport ne tentera-t-il personne?*"

In Egypt nationalist activities were stimulated by our difficulties. There was an occasion when the departing M. Deloncle, accompanied to his ship at Alexandria by a committee of enthusiasts, with a dramatic gesture flung the glass in which he had drunk their healths upon the deck and announced to his eager listeners that, as surely as it had been shattered into fragments, so surely was the time approaching when there would be no British left in Egypt.

In subsequent years I have met not a few eminent personalities who claimed that they had been among the rare exceptions to those who denounced the action of Great Britain, and that they had realised that no other course was possible if we were not to lose our hold on South Africa, a cardinal point in the British Empire. This was undoubtedly true as regards the late King Oscar of Sweden, a very shrewd judge of international affairs, who more than once reminded me of his friendly attitude, which was, he said, governed by sincere conviction.



There were degrees in the asperity of criticism to which we were subjected. But, so far as my personal experience went, the only concrete evidence of national sympathy for us came from the Greeks. In Egypt it was most pronounced. As regiment after regiment left for the Cape, to be replaced in some cases by their militia battalions, the Greeks hung out their flags and marched with the men through the streets, loading them with gifts of cigarettes. When in Cairo we organised a bazaar for the wounded, at which we only expected support from our own people, a delegation of the Greek colony arrived, headed by Ambroise Sinadino, who placed on a table a sack containing 500 sovereigns. This sum, he said, they proposed to pay in without reducing our stock by buying anything. The few Greeks in Khartoum, mess-caterers or merchants, sent a contribution of fifty pounds. From the earliest days of the national movement Greece had received constant evidence of sympathy from Great Britain, which never failed through the many vicissitudes of a century of struggle for emancipation. But though politicians may occasionally find it opportune to enlarge on traditional friendships, it is the exception for international relations to be governed by sentiment or gratitude. I am the more glad to place on record here the cordial and spontaneous initiative of the Greek community in Egypt.

In November I was sent to Rome to delimit the frontier between Eritrea and the Soudan with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, by whose department

the Italian colonies were then administered. We had had a recent case of plague in Egypt, after an interval of thirty-five days' immunity. Quarantine would therefore be inevitable. I found myself the only first-class passenger in the *Umberto I*, which carried no heavy cargo to steady her in the very bad weather which we encountered, but was transporting many thousands of quail imprisoned in wooden cages. I have sailed at close quarters with unwashed humans, with deck cargoes of apples and of onions, I have lived in close proximity to a copra store and camped in Africa when the porters had put down the native rations of sun-dried shark to windward, but no offence to the nostril which I had experienced ever equalled the penetrating odour of a deck-load of quail. On reaching Naples after a very rough night we were ordered to the quarantine harbour at Nisida for three days. There, as we swung at anchor, the wind over the cages blew aft and there was no escape. Everything smelt and tasted of quail. Food became repugnant, and it was a very long time before I could bring myself once more to eat one of those delicate little birds. The purgatory, however, ended at last, and I had earned my Paradise on the beautiful road to Rome through a glorious autumnal afternoon.

Lord Currie had invited me to stay at the Embassy. Both he and Lady Currie were old friends, and I had always been an admirer of Violet Fane. She was excellent company, though I cannot honestly say that nature had designed her to play the part of an Ambassadors. She would hardly



have claimed any predisposition for the rôle herself. Her French was fearless, but very insecure, as was revealed by her uncertainty whether the birds in the garden were *merles* or *merlans*. She was essentially bohemian, and had remained free to continue so till fairly late in life. It requires, *experto crede*, a certain discipline in early years to merge the bohemian in the diplomatist. She admitted to me that her "Sophy" was a faithful portrait of herself in youth. Her stories of those early years were very entertaining. The nurse's tale, accepted literally by an imaginative nature, had terrorised her childhood. There was a cupboard near the staircase in the country house where she was brought up, which she always passed on tiptoe, holding her breath. It had been pointed out to her as Jerry-go-nimble's cupboard. In it lived a terrible being who was all legs and who was summoned by exasperated nurses to carry off naughty children. He may be well known in nursery lore, but I had never before come across the fascinating name of Jerry-go-nimble.

Her passion at that time and ever after were her Pekingese dogs, for one of which, a disagreeable wall-eyed white and tan monster known as Buzzy, she had an especial weakness. So exceptional in colouring and points was he claimed to be that no suitable mate had ever been found for him, and perhaps the care that was taken to guard against a *mésalliance* had affected his temper. Not very long before, however Violet Fane explained to me, when crossing the Piazza of St. Mark at Venice her

vigilant eye suddenly lighted on the ideal bride. A matchmaking instinct gave her the courage to approach the owner. The gem in question belonged to a Russian Princess, and the psychological moment was at hand. A match was arranged, her own intended departure was postponed, and "two days later," she said, with the air of a successful negotiator, "I sent Buzzy off with a sprig of orange blossom in his collar."

Lord Currie had aged a great deal since I had seen him last. He had I think been bitterly disappointed by his experiences at Constantinople and the lack of support he had received from home. Such disillusion is apt to be the fate of under-secretaries who have had it all their own way at the Foreign Office, when they are sent themselves late in life to Embassies, where they become the acutest critics of that much-abused institution. On the day after my arrival I went with him to the Forum, where the famous Black Stone had lately been discovered by Boni, who was there to explain his theory of its origin. My old friend Baddeley also met us there and reconstructed for us the Basilica *Æmiliana*, which was being unearthed after the generous enthusiasm of Sir Lionel Phillips had enabled the houses which occupied the site to be demolished.

My business in Rome was with that fine old patriot and statesman, Marchese Visconti-Venosta, who was typical of a class no longer to be found in Italian political life. He made my task an easy one, and a week sufficed to conclude our negotiations



for a frontier which would only require delimitation on the spot after verification of tribal limits.

On the 6th of December I was back in Cairo. Ten days later a telegram was received for retransmission to Khartoum, offering Kitchener the post of second in command to Lord Roberts, who was leaving for South Africa to take over the grim inheritance of the first two disastrous months. The Empire had turned in the hour of need to that splendid veteran who served his country so magnificently till the end, and started on his last campaign with the telegram in his hand which announced the death of his only son. K. accepted the offer in terms which well became him and left Khartoum on the 18th of December. A cruiser was waiting to convey him to Gibraltar, where he met Roberts on the 26th. The telegrams which he sent off from Cairo impressed me greatly. They showed how strong a grasp he had of the military situation. Maxwell followed him before long to South Africa, and Gallwey,<sup>1</sup> whose organisation of the medical service of the Egyptian army had won high praise from our experts during the Khartoum campaign.

Most of my own connections and friends had gone or were on their way to South Africa, and I received at this time a number of interesting letters, most of them extremely critical of the leadership in the earlier weeks. But as my chief aim in these volumes has been to record my own personal observations and experiences, I shall not refer to their contents. Everything combined to make the opening weeks of

<sup>1</sup> Major-General Sir Thomas Gallwey.

the new century a period of gloom and depression. At home there was a devastating epidemic of influenza. India was suffering from the worst famine experienced for years, and a Russian movement on Afghanistan was threatened. The seizure of German ships suspected of carrying contraband for the Transvaal appeared to have been based on misleading, perhaps purposely misleading, information, and in Egypt, and more particularly in the Soudan, we had grounds for serious preoccupation. We felt deeply the humiliation of our initial failures at Ladysmith and Spion Kop. The only consolation was the manner in which the nation met a critical situation. Public criticism was honourably restrained, there was a constant flow of volunteers for the front, while the dominions revealed their solidarity with the cause of the mother-country by offering contingents. To carry on a war extending over a vast area of country seven thousand miles from home, and to land, as we eventually did, 200,000 men in South Africa, was no mean achievement. I was much interested, in February, 1900, to read a speech of the Prime Minister's in which he excused the Government's lack of information on the plea that so little provision was made for secret service and protested against the undue influence exercised by the Treasury. With this criticism many who have served abroad, and have witnessed the fatal consequences of a refusal to include in estimates a very modest timely expenditure which would have saved us many thousands later on, would be disposed to agree. In one of



his many letters to me Cromer wrote: "British Governments have many excellent qualities, but foresight, notably when the Treasury is concerned, is not one of them." The malicious insinuated that Lord Salisbury's attack on the Treasury had been made under the impression that Welby, whom he disliked, and who had resigned several years before, was still permanent Under-Secretary, and that he was much disconcerted when Sir Francis Mowat, whom he appreciated, offered his resignation.

Wingate was appointed Sirdar and Governor-General of the Soudan in succession to Kitchener. My wife and I had intended to accompany him to Khartoum, when news arrived which necessitated his premature departure. It had been rumoured in the market-place that attempts were being made through the Egyptian officers to undermine the loyalty of the black troops, but we were nevertheless greatly surprised when two of those battalions showed signs of insubordination. The black troops had indeed their grievances, though they had been too greatly in awe of the old Sirdar to give expression to them until after his departure. They had no pension rights, and a number of them had been discharged after ten years' service with a very small gratuity. A report had been assiduously disseminated among them that they were about to be sent to South Africa, where we had suffered a disastrous defeat. The despatch of some machine guns lent by the Egyptian Government gave some colour to the belief. It was also whispered that there had been a rising in Cairo against the British.

The efforts of the nationalists and the native press had begun to tell on the younger officers. The Khedive, who could not be acquitted of having surreptitiously encouraged this spirit, now began to be alarmed at its manifestations and showed himself anxious to co-operate. He liked Wingate, while he had always detested Kitchener. He consequently furnished the former with letters which, when their contents became known, altogether disconcerted the officers who had thought they were carrying out his wishes.

Wingate dealt with the situation with great discretion. A mixed court of enquiry containing a majority of Egyptian members was appointed, and a limited number of officers were cashiered. Matters then settled down rapidly. It is only of interest to refer to these experiences because it is probably not realised by those "who live at home at ease" how constantly in those days we in Egypt were faced with difficulties of which little echo ever reached the general public. In this instance we had been very near a serious crisis.

Our inveterate enemy of the eighties in the neighbourhood of Suakin, the Hadendowa Osman Digna, had at last been caught at Tokar. I saw him on his way to Rosetta, where he was to be confined, a grey-bearded old man of sixty, old then for the Soudan, though he is still alive to-day, who could show the scars of five wounds received in the desultory fighting round Suakin, where he was so often officially reported killed. He had, he said, ceased to believe in the Mahdi when he saw him



leaving the true path, and the Khalifa had never taken him into confidence. All his former associates were now dead or dispersed. During Wingate's action at Gedid he had escaped with his *jibbeh* turned inside out, and after long wanderings he had followed the line of the Atbara, working his way towards the coast with the intention of crossing to the Hedjaz and making the pilgrimage. I could not help feeling a certain sympathy for the solitary old man, who had been in deadly earnest in his elementary fanaticism. It was difficult for me to realise then, looking at this wiry Arab veteran, that he could have given us so much trouble in past times or that his exploits could have loomed so large as they once did in the daily press, when there were fewer serious problems to discuss. K. had reason to know him well, for it was at Suakin that he received a wound in the jaw which was the occasion for a famous laconic telegram from the medical officer, who reported that Colonel Kitchener had passed a good night and a bullet. So had my old friend Alfred Paget, who for years patrolled that inhospitable Red Sea coast in his venerable sloop *Dolphin*, reputed to be the worst-groomed ship in the Navy, though it was commanded by one of the most gallant gentlemen that ever sailed under the white ensign.

The Odyssey of the *Dolphin* and her crew, both ashore and afloat, had it ever been written, would have afforded entertaining reading, and even the log would be full of interest. I asked Alfred Paget one day what had induced him to borrow the balloon

of the once famous "Professor" Baldwin and descend from mid-air with his parachute, the value and capacity of which I believe that aeronaut was the first to demonstrate in public. "Well, old sportsman," said Alfred after a moment's reflection, "I thought it was the sort of thing which I should be afraid to do, and therefore I felt that I had better do it." What did however give him some real trepidation was the fear that his mother might hear of the exploit. It was characteristic of the ancient mariner of Suakin that, having no other prospect of returning to active service during the Great War, he dropped his admiral's rank and took command of a mine-sweeper in the North Sea. And of such is the empire of Britain!

The envelopment at Paardeburg and the news of the relief of Ladysmith not many days afterwards had their immediate effect in Egypt. For some time past, when all was going amiss, the usual daily petitions had almost ceased to be addressed to the Agency. Petitioners had begun to lose faith in British omnipotence. The day after Cronje's surrender was announced we received nine, and the following morning twelve. It would be difficult to find a more apt illustration of the importance of prestige in the East.

At the beginning of March I started alone for Khartoum, travelling with Sir William Garstin, who was off again to his last hobby the Sudd, of which six blocks had already been cleared from the course of the White Nile. The little terrier Lady, anticipating a possible new separation, had sat all day



on the cabin-trunk in my room, whining from time to time and watching my every movement. I had not the heart to leave her behind. The journey to the Soudan had now a regular time-table; twenty-four hours' train from Cairo to Assouan, fifty hours up-stream by boat through Nubia to Wady Halfa, and then thirty-six hours by the desert railway to Khartoum. Nubia has a special charm of its own. A very golden sand overflows the edge of the rocks bounding the narrow strip of green on the Nile banks which marks the only cultivable ground. In the light of early morning I saw the great rock shrine of Abou Simbel, with its huge Colossi, relieving from the river-cliff, staring across the desert to the sunrise with the stony eyes of eternity. Of all the marvels of Egypt, Abou Simbel has left with me the most haunting and enduring impression. It would be difficult to analyse what process of assimilation, what association of which we are hardly conscious, makes certain places and certain objects rather than others take possession of the imagination and abide with us, makes particular lines of poetry or chords of music cleave to our lives. It is not by any means the most beautiful places or the greatest works of art which have this subtle power. There is a ruined castle a mile or so up a lateral valley from the Moselle which has always epitomised in my imagination the whole world of romance. A thought of the winding ascent in the massive round tower, up which the lord of Ehrenburg once rode, never fails to evoke for me all the quick, fierce life of the Middle Age.

A portrait of the mother of Conradin at San Martino above Naples, by some thirteenth-century sculptor, means more to me than many masterpieces in marble. The scent of violets in the early year always suggests to me the colour and magic of Papal Rome in the sixties, as I saw it when a boy. So the rock-hewn giants of the pink cliff at Abou Simbel remain with me as the most enduring expression of the soul of ancient Egypt.

The night before our arrival the first act of a tragedy took place. I was in bed when the train stopped to water at Hamadeb wells, a desert post marked only by a couple of tents. Some one opened the door of the carriage, and Lady, who had never left me for a moment, appears to have jumped out. The train went on before I had discovered her absence. The communication cord had not been properly connected, and every effort to stop the train was fruitless. We reached Khartoum at 5 a.m. Telegrams were sent all along the line, and the reply came from Hamadeb that the dog was there and would be sent on by the next opportunity. But the trains only ran every other day.

My first impressions of the new Khartoum were, I must admit, looking back on them now, unjustly critical. The scale on which the Palace and the Government buildings round it had been conceived, and the scheme for the Gordon College, struck me as savouring rather of what the Greeks call *megalo-prepeia*. I knew how short money was, and must be for some years to come. We had been educated by narrow circumstances in Egypt to contract our



ambitions and only consider the sternly practical. Looking on what seemed to me then a debauch of bricks and mortar, I reflected that the troops were still under canvas, as they had now been living for four years. The buildings, so far as they had then been constructed, had been paid for with the local tax of the *Ussher* or tithe, which had not hitherto gone into accounts. Thereafter it would have to appear in the budget. But K. had imagination, and I now realise that he was quite right to lay out Khartoum in the grand manner and to emphasise a contrast with the vast, mud-built, squalid metropolis of Omdurman. The new Khartoum was to have a moral significance, and results have justified the larger conception.

The recent military troubles kept Wingate tied to the spot and rendered impossible an expedition which we had contemplated making together through Gedaref to Gallabat and then on to Kassala to meet the Governor of Eritrea. Meanwhile my little dog had not arrived. The station guards reported that she would not allow herself to be caught, so I determined to return at once to Hamadeb. Sowerby of the Engineers gave me a truck in which to sleep, and I laid in a small store of food. I spent two nights and days in the desert, alone save for the two Egyptian guards at the solitary wells. They told me that Lady came back from time to time to the station, but had always run away again into the bush when they tried to catch her. I scoured all the villages in the direction of the river, saw the Omdehs, and offered rewards for information. But

only in one case did I hear that a white dog had been seen drinking at the well. I was quite miserable brooding over the fate of this sensitive little creature who could not bear to be left behind. I could hardly eat or sleep as I shivered in my truck through the cold desert nights. People affect to be enthusiastic about the desert and write about it in terms of lyric exaltation. I have never felt that charm, and have only been impressed with its cruelty, whether in Somaliland or the Soudan. Burning hot by day, and, here at any rate, bitterly cold at night, it has fleeting moments of beauty at sunrise and sunset. Its mirages cajole, its barrenness repels, and in the end it kills. Now the desert had taken my little dog. She had crossed Abyssinia and marched round Lake Rudolf in safety, only to fall a victim, exhausted and despairing, to some jackal or hyena in this abominable waste of sand. Never, I resolved, would I give my heart to a dog again. The inevitable sorrows of the world are enough without seeking unnecessary ones. On the third day I renounced the hopeless search, and Midwinter, also of the Egyptian Engineers, picked me up on his return from bridge-building along the line and took me on to the camp at Shendy. Leaving Halfa, I was the only passenger on the steamer, feeling its difficult way through the shallows of one of the lowest Niles on record.

I had hoped to renew my too brief visit to Khartoum, but was unable to do so before leaving Egypt. Nor was I able to realize that ambition when once more there with the special mission in 1920, though



two of our members went to the Soudan. I much regretted not to have been able then personally to witness the results of Wingate's civilising administration. Of all the constructive imperial work accomplished in recent years there had been little to compare with the redemption of the Soudan under his beneficent guidance. A population of over eight millions had there been reduced to less than two under the grim terror of Mahdism, and thousands of once populous villages had disappeared. To-day those far-off regions of Central Africa enjoy a prosperity of which they never dreamed before, and the security that the labour of a quick-witted population will not be exploited by an unwelcome alien domination, but remain their own to enjoy. For nearly twenty years Wingate devoted his energies, his experience, and his heart to the reclamation of the Soudan. It was a matter of regret to many of his friends that he should have been called away from work for which he was so eminently qualified, to Cairo, and confronted with a perplexing reversion for which he was in no way responsible. After a brief interval conditions in Egypt rendered military intervention inevitable, and thus his connection with the field of his life's work was severed. The Soudan is so remote from observation, and had been so long happy under his governorship in having little history to record, that I sometimes wonder if his splendid work there has been adequately appreciated by his countrymen.

While returning home through Rome I was to have dealt with some further points which had

arisen regarding the Soudan-Eritrean frontier. But the Italian Government had not yet received the necessary reports and the discussion had to be postponed, as I had been entrusted with the preliminary arrangements for the Khedive's long-deferred visit to England. While at Rome I learned that Lord Currie had asked for my appointment to the secretaryship of Embassy there, which was about to fall vacant. But I was hierarchically still rather junior for such a post and hardly expected that his suggestion would be adopted.

On the night of the 18th of May we were listening to the haunting voice of Duse at the Lyceum, when after the second act Comyns Carr walked through the curtain and informed the house that a telegram had just been posted at the Mansion House announcing the relief of Mafeking. Only Duse could have held the house after that. But she did for one more act. That night no one slept, London went mad, and a carnival of rather Philistine rejoicing gave a new word to the language. Very few had known till then that Colonel Mahon had been leading a very mobile force of 3,000 men to the outpost which Baden-Powell had been holding for so many months, and still fewer knew that Frankie Rhodes, who, unable to take any active part in military operations, had devoted himself to hospital work at Ladysmith, also rode in with the column. Mahon had passed through Cairo some months before on his way from the equatorial provinces. There was a military steeplechase that day at Ghezireh, and he was reluctantly persuaded during his one



afternoon to ride a famous white horse which had more than once been a winner. A youngster crossed him at a jump; the white horse fell with him and bruised him badly. But he was taken to the station in a condition in which others would have gone to hospital and caught his ship for South Africa. The next news I heard of him was that of his long ride to Mafeking.

Some nights afterwards Duse was giving some recitations at a house in South Audley Street where we were guests. I heard one lady inquire of another: "Do you see so very much in her, after all?" "No," replied the other. "I don't; but then, you know, I'm so bad at French."

The preparations for the Khedive's visit took me to Windsor, and repeatedly to Marlborough House, as the Prince of Wales took personal charge of the programme. I was to coach the Prime Minister on any Egyptian issues which might be raised, and for that purpose went to lunch with him in Arlington Street. An unfortunate incident had arisen after the Khedive had left Egypt. The barracks of the British infantry stationed at Alexandria were some miles out of town, near the sea. A short distance beyond lay the Khedivial estate of Montazah with its country house and farms. Two English officers who were returning from the city to their quarters by boat were landed by mistake within the precincts of the Khedivial property instead of opposite the Mustapha barracks. Neither of these officers knew a word of Arabic. They were therefore unable to explain their presence. The Khedive's Bedawin

gaffirs (watchmen), finding two strangers wandering about on the estate, fell upon them and mishandled them very severely. The matter was duly investigated and the gaffirs were arrested. The Khedive, we were informed, was greatly incensed at the detention of his servants and demanded their release. But as they could not be allowed to take the law into their own hands with impunity, they were sent for trial. It was assumed that the Khedive would take the matter up in London. I therefore gave Lord Salisbury a precise account of the facts and expressed the hope that no encouragement would be given to any pretension that the Khedivial domain was outside the law. "But," said his Lordship, "if I understand you rightly, these officers were trespassing." Technically I had to admit that they were, but in perfect innocence, having been landed there by a boatman who had been directed in Alexandria to take them back to their quarters. "If they were trespassing on some one else's property," he insisted, "I think they deserved all that they got." Lord Cranborne, who was also present, took my side, and there was a lively discussion between father and son. I had no doubt, however, that if the matter were ever to be raised the Prime Minister's fellow-feeling for the landlord would not prejudice his ultimate treatment of the question.

Wingate and I, who were to take charge of the Khedive during his visit, proceeded in the *Osborne* to Flushing, where he was due to arrive in a steamer from Antwerp. We found him suffering from a



severely inflamed throat which had begun to trouble him some days before. We were to spend the night at Flushing and cross the next day. That morning his throat was much worse, and the naval surgeon on board feared diphtheria. He remained in bed and was unable to take the salute on reaching Port Victoria. It was a moment for rapid decision, and after consulting the equerry attached to His Highness we telegraphed to London to put off all arrangements for the reception and sent a special train to London to fetch Sir Felix Semon. His diagnosis was by no means reassuring, but only a bacteriological examination could conclusively decide the nature of the malady. Fortunately it proved only to be a very severe case of septic throat needing a few days' care, and I was relieved from the anticipation of being charged by the inventors of calumny in the native press in Egypt with having poisoned our guest. But we had to remain from the 21st of June to the 27th at Port Victoria, tied up to a quay with a desolate outlook behind it, consuming our hearts in intolerable boredom, after exhausting our subjects of conversation with the staff on the first day. Beyond a visit to London one afternoon with Prince Mohamed Ali, the Khedive's younger brother, my only occupation was the reconstruction of the programme, which had to be somewhat curtailed.

At last, on the 27th, we went up to Buckingham Palace. The kindness and consideration of the Queen in act and message could not be exceeded, and it evidently affected the young Khedive, who had

seldom met with so much friendly and almost maternal sympathy. The visit to Windsor, with its dignity and ceremonial, profoundly impressed the staff, who told me that they could not sleep from emotion after the conversation which that wonderful little lady in her wheeled chair had made a point of having with each one of them.

A younger generation, less affected by tradition and iconoclastically impatient with the ideals of the nineteenth century, can hardly conceive the atmosphere which at the end of eighteen hundred surrounded the venerable Queen who for fifty years had presided over the destinies of a great Empire, which during her reign first grew conscious of itself. To those of us who had devoted our service in various capacities to no mean ideal, the little lady on whom was concentrated the loyalties of men round all the seven seas, whose health we had drunk nightly beyond the line, meant a great fact which appealed to an unquestioned sentiment, all the warmer because the dignity of her position had never extinguished a very human side. My wife, who was also invited to Windsor to dine and sleep, sitting by the wheeled chair had expressed her fear that the duties of the evening must be very tiring to the Queen, who only smiled that very winning smile and said, "My dear, it's what I'm here for." It was the last time that either of us saw her.

The abbreviated programme of the visit included a lunch with the Duke of Cambridge, a dinner at Buckingham Palace to all old Egyptian officers and officials of distinction, a dinner at Marlborough



House with a State concert afterwards, and finally a luncheon at the Guildhall, where the Khedive made two little speeches in English. There seemed for the moment every probability that a turning-point in his life had been reached. He assured us and many others that if at times he had shown opposition it had been in the sincere conviction that the view he sustained was right. Cromer had, he admitted, always been very just, but was sometimes severe. As for himself, could he have his choice he would have preferred the simple life of a country gentleman to being the ruler of a country. In all this he was at the moment quite sincere. I had then great hopes that the visit would do much for future relations. Wingate, Carington, and I accompanied the party back to Calais.

My wife returned with me to Egypt, where we had taken a house at Ramleh for the summer. After a long period of anxious suspense a message from China in June justified some faint hope that our friends in the Legations who were being besieged by the Boxers at Peking might still be alive, in spite of the very full and circumstantial account of their massacre which had been published in the *Daily Mail*. This had been so generally accepted as authentic that a memorial service had been actually celebrated in Cairo, and I had congratulated myself, finding the world still interesting, on not having gone to China. At last in mid-August we learned that the international relief expedition had entered Peking and effected their release from a very trying position. I have never been able to obtain from

any of my friends who were there a really illuminating account of the siege.

I missed Cromer in Egypt by a few days. It had been his intention on arriving in England to press strongly for some assistance in defraying the administration of the Soudan, which, though placed under the British and Egyptian flags conjointly, was financed solely by the Treasury at Cairo. A long time would have to elapse before that vast country, depopulated and ruined by the exactions of the Khalifa, could hope to provide a revenue which would render it even modestly self-supporting, while the subsidy still fell short of obvious requirements. But Egypt could do no more, could hardly even justifiably continue to do what she had done hitherto. Cromer accordingly went, with Gorst to support him, and laid the situation before the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Soudan was a British as much as an Egyptian interest. Some help was indispensable if the work which had been accomplished was not to be arrested. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach listened to his exposition in silence, looking down his beard. The only answer Cromer obtained was comprised in four words: "I have no money." Further details regarding the position were supplied by Gorst. They received the same answer: "I have no money." Then Cromer got angry and let himself go. "It is always the same thing with you at home," he said; "you never look forward. You did not ask my advice. I knew we were not ready to take over the Soudan. But you suddenly ordered us to go there without consulting me, and



now we are there you repudiate responsibility and leave us to get out of our difficulties as best we can." The Chancellor only repeated, "I am sorry, but I have no money." "If you have no money to give," Cromer rejoined, "have you any advice to offer as to what under the circumstances we can do for the best?" The amazing answer of a statesman who enjoyed a certain reputation at home was: "If you cannot afford to remain there, you had better give it up and come away."

## CHAPTER IX

1900-1

A Palace intrigue. Visit to Greece. A ride through the Morea. Delphi. Lord Lansdowne at the Foreign Office. Death of Queen Victoria. Leave of absence. Verona and London. Death of the Empress Frederick. An appreciation. My appointment as Secretary of Embassy at Rome. Wilfrid Blunt and the 11th Hussars. An incident and a White Paper. The return of Arabi Pasha from Ceylon. Visit to Abouteeg. Mahmoud Pasha Suleiman. Departure from Cairo.

After the Khedive's return I became most unwillingly involved in what may be described as a typical palace intrigue which affords a curious example of the overtime problems occasionally thrust upon the British Agency.

A brother-in-law of the Sultan Abdul Hamid, Mahmoud Damad Pasha, was a fugitive from the wrath he had provoked by associating with the Young Turks. During the summer he had seen a good deal of the Khedive, who evidently gave him every encouragement to come to Egypt. He duly arrived in the middle of September, and a series of indignant telegrams from Constantinople followed one another, protesting against his presence there.

The Khedive had invited my wife and myself



to spend the afternoon at his maritime seat near Alexandria, to see the farms and model breeding establishments, which he took great pleasure in showing. As a country gentleman and student of agricultural economy he always seemed at his best. This visit afforded me an opportunity of opening up the subject of Mahmoud Damad.

He admitted that he had seen a good deal of the Sultan's brother-in-law in Switzerland, and claimed to have suggested to him that before coming to Egypt he should consult the British authorities. Mahmoud Damad said that Lord Currie, the Ambassador in Rome, was a personal friend of his, and he would go there with that object. He did actually pass through Rome, and the Khedive therefore presumed that I should have been fully informed. Unfortunately I happened to know what His Highness did not, namely, that the Ambassador was absent from his post. Mahmoud had, he said, little money left, and realised that his position was hopeless. He wanted to find a way out of his present straits and return to Constantinople.

He then gave me the following account of his own connection with the case. The Sultan had requested him, the Khedive, to persuade the fugitive to return to Turkey. Mahmoud was disposed to do so if he could secure a guarantee for his own safety, and he would readily have accompanied the Khedive to the Bosphorus. The latter accordingly wrote from Europe to the Sultan in this sense. After a considerable interval the only reply he received was to the effect that his letter had been

mislaid. It would receive an answer when and if it came to light again. The Khedive rejoined that other monarchs with whom he was in the habit of corresponding treated his letters with more consideration. He repeated the proposal, and asked for a reply, which this time arrived without delay. He was on no account to bring Mahmoud to Constantinople. The Sultan did not intend to allow him to return. He was an exile and would never be pardoned. The same mail, however, brought Mahmoud himself a letter from the Grand Vizir, informing him that a pardon and a high position were awaiting him if he would come back. This letter was shown to the Khedive, who wrote once more pointing out the inconsistency of the two communications. The Sultan replied that the Grand Vizir was an imbecile, and had no business to write as he had done. The Khedive was moreover instructed to return at once to Egypt, where ill-conditioned persons were reported to be contemplating demonstrations of hostility to his Imperial Majesty which must be prevented. He replied that his health did not permit him to return to Egypt in midsummer, and continued his travels, going as far as Odessa and waiting to see whether or not he would himself be invited to Constantinople. Meanwhile he ordered his yacht to go to Salonika, and announced his intention of embarking there. So far from being invited cordially to visit his suzerain he received a peremptory message forbidding him to go to Salonika and ordering him to embark at Constantinople.



Now this involved story of contradictions might have puzzled me had I not learned from other sources that in the matter of Mahmoud Damad the Khedive was not influenced solely by altruistic benevolence, but was playing a hand of his own. He was anxious to induce the Sultan to bestow on him a residence at Constantinople which he desired and had conceived that Mahmoud Damad could be made a lever to force the hand of the Suzerain.

Meanwhile the exile had arrived in Egypt, as he claimed, on the Khedive's invitation. All his movements had been carefully watched, and on the day he left Brindisi a somewhat incoherent telegram was despatched from the palace directing the Khedive (*a*) to stop him from coming, (*b*) to prevent him from disembarking, (*c*) to send him back to Constantinople, where a full pardon awaited him. The Khedive replied that he could neither prevent his landing nor send him back without a judgment of the Courts. He had taken the advice of his ministers, and they considered it desirable that Mahmoud Damad should return to Europe. Such recalcitrance inevitably provoked a long and indignant message. Ministers had nothing to do with such a matter. It was a question of royal prerogative. The Khedive must act in accordance with his instructions. It was impossible that Great Britain, which, although in military occupation of Egypt, had undertaken to maintain the integrity of the Empire, should interfere. His Imperial Majesty was much put out by the Khedive's telegram, and had sent a copy of it to his mother.

I was a little puzzled to know how to get the Khedive out of the mess in which he had thus involved himself. We might have endeavoured to obtain guarantees for Mahmoud and his property at Constantinople, but the Sultan's undertakings did not inspire confidence, and there was a natural reluctance to intervene there. We were, however, ready to support the Khedive in refusing to surrender him, while inviting him to return to Europe as soon as possible if he could not make arrangements himself for his return to Turkey. I spent a not very pleasant quarter of an hour with the unfortunate exile, explaining the situation to him and offering him our assistance to get away.

I had presumed that the Khedive would be much relieved to have our co-operation in removing the cause of his embarrassment before a crisis occurred in his relations with the Sultan. But in the East you will usually find that the conclusion arrived at is exactly the opposite of that which you assume the premises would justify. The Khedive was by no means pleased. He argued thus: If Mahmoud Demad goes away now the Sultan will either believe that I have servilely obeyed his orders, or that the British Government has overridden my wishes and ordered him to go. In either case the advantage will be with the Sultan and I shall be humiliated. On the other hand, when he finds that menaces are of no avail, he will try other means, and a compromise may well ensue which will enable me to secure the coveted site. The Khedive, therefore, feeling quite safe with Great Britain behind him,



decided to keep Mahmoud in Egypt, even though he might prove an expensive guest, until the Sultan had changed his tone. Meanwhile we made no objection to his remaining while negotiations were proceeding, and beyond the receipt of a very stiff telegram announcing that H.I.M. *attendra les événements*, nothing happened. The matter had fortunately remained exclusively between the Sultan and the Khedive.

Abdul Hamid's ingenious methods of circumventing inopportune interference were illustrated by an episode which occurred at that time when the powers, whose attention was entirely concentrated on China, had suffered a notorious Pasha who had been identified with massacres to be appointed to an important vilayet without protest. The Consular body, however, marked their sense of the outrage by refraining from calling on or in any way acknowledging the new Governor. In due course the anniversary of the Sultan's accession recurred, and the Governor issued a circular to announce that he would hold a reception. The Consuls all regretted in identical terms that they would be unable to attend. The Governor, who informed Constantinople by telegraph, then received instructions to be diplomatically indisposed, and to appoint the military commandant to receive in his place. The latter accordingly announced that in consequence of the Governor's illness he would preside over the reception at the Palace. The tenacious Consuls, however, replied that they would be happy to attend a reception at his private house,

but that they were unable to enter the residence of the Vali. This decision was also communicated to Constantinople, whereupon the Governor was deposed and replaced by the Military Commandant. The reception was then held at the Konak, and the Consuls duly attended it. But on the following morning the Commandant was in turn deposed, and the old Governor was reinstated.

Another ground of conflict with Constantinople arose that summer owing to the death of the venerable Greek Patriarch of Alexandria. He had filled that high position for so many years that there were few alive who could testify to the procedure followed at his elevation, which had been long anterior to the British occupation. The Sultan asserted his prerogative of appointment, while the Greek colony claimed the right of electing their Patriarch, subject to eventual confirmation by the Sovereign. After searching for such precedents as could be found we supported the title of the Greeks, which in Cromer's absence it fell to my lot to defend.

As my attendance in the early summer on the Khedive had not been reckoned as leave I had still some weeks to dispose of on Cromer's return. We decided to spend them in Greece, where I was anxious to visit some of the Frankish castles to supplement the historical information which I had been collecting for my book on the Princes of Achaia. In mid-October we found our way by Brindisi to Patras. Thence we explored Elis, where the Villehardouins established their capital. After visiting the site



of Andravida we rode on to Clarenza, now once more called by its ancient name Kyllene, never doubting the legend that Philippa of Hainault regarded the title of Duke of Clarence, which she conveyed to her son Lionel, as an inheritance from that Florent of Hainault who became Prince of Achaia by his marriage with Isabella Villehardouin.

A few miles south on its high promontory, watching the Zante channel and the water highway northward to Cephalonia, rises the great castle of Clairmont or Chlounmoutzi, which Geoffrey Villehardouin II, braving the interdict of Rome, built with the revenues of the Church to be the key of the Western Morea. This thirteenth-century fortress, known later as Castel Tornese, must have been practically impregnable in the Middle Ages. It had remained intact until about a century ago, when it was mined and blown up by Ibrahim Pasha.

Half-way there in a wooded fold of the hills we spent some time in a little monastery, with pointed arches in the upper windows which suggested a building of the Frankish period. It is called Vlachernae, and the similarity of name to that of the imperial palace at Constantinople, together with the presence of the floreate cross of the Frankish emperors upon a marble slab on the outer wall, seemed to justify a presumption that the monastery had been appropriated to guard the grave of the Emperor Robert, who died in 1228 while on a visit to the little court of Geoffrey II. Within the church are some remains of a canopied tomb. The devastating passage of Ibrahim's troops had left

the little monastery a wreck, and conventual records in Greece have all been destroyed or dispersed.

By Pyrgos we went on to Olympia, which my wife had never seen. The beauty of the *Hermes of Praxiteles*, one of the comparatively rare Greek masterpieces which we can with certainty ascribe as an original to the master's own hand, had a profound effect upon her, and this may not have been without its unconscious influence in making her devote herself for some years to sculpture, which she would have carried much farther had not public duties when I became head of a Mission left too little time for art.

The *Demarchs* (mayors) in the Peloponnesian towns, with that freemasonry which prevails among the Greeks where patriotic ambitions are concerned, had somehow become aware that I had been of service to their interests in the question of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, and we received everywhere the most friendly assistance and delicate attention. At Olympia we secured horses and baggage mules and rode to *Andritsena* and the temple at *Bassæ*, which I have described in my previous volume, and so on across the lovely Arcadian highlands to *Carytena*, where the southern branch of the *Alpheius*, known as the *Rouphias*, pierces the mountains on its rock-bound passage from the plateau of *Megalopolis* to the sea. The castle perched on a lofty crag at the entrance to the defile was designed to hold in awe the Slavonians of the highlands. It was the head-quarters of the Frankish barony of *Escorta* bestowed on *Hugues de Bruyères*,



whose son Geoffrey married the daughter of the first Duke of Athens and became the most romantic figure in the stirring annals of medieval Greece. Thence we descended into the plain of Megalopolis, where the British school at Athens had recently been conducting excavations, and so by Mycenæ and Tyrins made our way to Nauplia. As the bay opened out in front of us, we saw a number of big ships lying at anchor. It was the British fleet from Malta, and hastily changing our garments, travel-stained after a ride of many days, we rowed out in the evening to the flagship and found Charlie Beresford, who was much surprised to see such unexpected visitors.

When I left my post at Athens in 1890 Delphi had not yet been excavated. In the meantime its wonders had been disclosed by the French school. We therefore made our way through the Corinth canal and across the gulf to Itea, whence a tolerable mountain road led up to one of the most impressive sites on earth. Fifteen hundred years had passed since the last oracle proclaimed to the imperial apostate that the fair hall had fallen, that the prophetic laurel was withered, and the speaking fountain dry. *Vicisti Galilæe!* Yet still a magic haunts the chasm in the mountains which represented for the ancient world a link with spiritual forces dimly apprehended, and interpreted for them the mystery of life. No other place to which my wanderings have taken me has seemed so well to justify its mystic renown as Delphi, and nowhere have I been more conscious of the influence of the

soul of nature, which is everywhere subtly present in Greece. Up the valley behind Itea lay Salona with its castle, the barony of the Stromonours in the thirteenth century, round which legends gather of a more material character. Parnassus and Helicon dominate a scene which for beauty of outline and colour has few equals in the world. Opposite, the great rock of Acrocorinth evokes legendary, ancient, medieval, and more modern associations. It is an exquisite world of beauty and solitude where the ages call to the aftertime.

In Athens, where I saw the Crown Princess, I was distressed to hear a very sad account of the Empress Frederick, with whom I had spent many memorable days in Greece. The terrible disease which had killed the Emperor had attacked her also, and was making disastrous progress. In mid-November we were back in Cairo in a very attractive little house which we had bought, conveniently near to the Agency, and covered on three sides with a bougainvillea which entirely concealed the structure and almost blinded with its intensity of colour in spring and summer.

The end of 1900 brought many changes. The staff at the Agency had been entirely renewed. Norman, Hohler, and Akers-Douglas had joined us. Only Boyle and myself seemed permanent. The British Commissioner of the Debt, Sir Alonzo Money, a veteran of the Indian Mutiny, had died, and Cecil Spring Rice was to replace him in a post which hardly offered sufficient opportunities to so active a mind. Gleichen, who had been wounded in South Africa,



joined the Intelligence Department of the Egyptian Army. Colonel Le Gallais was also to have come back from the Transvaal to be Adjutant-General. But just after winning one of the few real successes we had had to our credit for some time and taking seven guns, that brilliant officer was killed. It was to me one of the saddest losses in that long-drawn-out struggle, which had been responsible for the death of poor George Steevens at Ladysmith from enteric fever. The same fatal disease of the battle area also carried off Prince Christian Victor, one of the best and kindest of men, who volunteered for every hard service and always claimed less than his due.

The war and the criticisms, now made with less reserve on its conduct and responsibilities, rendered a remodelling of the Government inevitable. Lord Salisbury, who was anxious to contract his obligations, gave up the Foreign Office. Suggestions were repeatedly made in the Press that Lord Cromer should succeed him and be recalled to join the Cabinet, where his sound sense, business instincts and synthetic breadth of view would have been invaluable. But he did not belong to the close borough of politics, and except in rare moments of national emergency only the regular players are regarded as qualified to take part in the game. The opportunity recurred some years later when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was forming his Government and Cromer was invited to take charge of the Foreign Office. But by that time his failing health made it impossible for him to contem-

plate acceptance. Lord Lansdowne, who had been most unjustly taken to task for the fossilisation of the War Office induced by a long process of time, was transferred to the Foreign Office, where he was soon to reveal himself as one of our most successful and courageous foreign ministers. Two of my contemporaries, Brodrick and Selborne, took charge of the War Office and the Admiralty, and George Wyndham became Irish Secretary.

The tide had turned in South Africa. But the end was not quite yet, and the venerable Queen, who had never lost heart in the days of greatest gloom, was not to live to see it. Her sixty-three years' reign closed in January, 1901, after only a few days of illness. There were few still alive who remembered any other sovereign, and it was difficult to accustom oneself to the solution of continuity which her death implied. Her influence, real enough and admirably adapted to the period in which she lived, however much modern scepticism and flippancy may seek to belittle it, had reconstituted and given the throne a grace which it had entirely lost with the four Georges. Those sixty-three years had been astonishingly fertile in result to human progress and national development. Facilities for communication had changed the face of the world and the British Empire had found itself. For its members the great outcome of the Victorian age was the realisation *quod cuncti gens una sumus*.

The funeral in England had been fixed for the 2nd of February. In Cairo on that day three memorial services were held, at ten, eleven, and



twelve: the first an official one, the second for the British community, and the third an impressive military ceremony in the barrack square at Kasr-el-Nil, in which the chaplains of all denominations took part, with muffled drums and pipes and volleys from the guns. The garrison was drawn up in a hollow square, and in the centre Reggie Talbot sat his horse, immovable as an equestrian statue. The Khedive, who sent his brother to England to represent him, showed real feeling, which even impressed Cromer. Indeed since the visit to England all had gone more smoothly. The German Emperor, who had in December earned goodwill at home by refusing to receive Krüger, over whom Paris had been unnecessarily demonstrative, became quite popular in England by his demeanour at the funeral, and for the moment the clouds on the North Sea coast appeared to be clearing.

We left Egypt in April for Venice, where I wanted to look up a manuscript of Sanudo in St. Mark's Library for my study of medieval Greece. That famous institution is admirably served. There were no formalities and no waiting, though the document I wished to consult is one which can seldom be demanded. At Verona, where we decided to remain a day or two as our eldest boy had what appeared to be a feverish cold, we ended by remaining three weeks and passed through a period of intense anxiety as his illness proved to be influenzal pneumonia. He was admirably cared for by the chief surgeon of the civil hospital. In a long experience in different parts of the country I have learned to have

great respect for the Italian medical school. Half my leave was lost, but we started for home with a deep sense of gratitude that the boy was well again. During these weeks in which I learned to know Verona well I was able when convalescence began to make some investigations at the municipal archives into the antecedents of the long extinct family of the Delle Carceri, who took part in the Fourth Crusade, and became the feudal Lords of Euboea in the thirteenth century.

Just before our departure the Bishop of Verona, who had been to Rome to receive the Cardinal's hat, returned to his see. A special number of the local paper was issued containing messages of welcome from all the communes under his jurisdiction. Among these was one in a language I had never seen before. It is a dialect of German, and it was said to be spoken in one commune of Verona only, but in seventeen of Vicenza.

Locally it is described as Cimbric, a name for which there can be no justification. It would rather appear to be due to some overflow into the plain of Germanic peoples from Tyrol. Verona in this dialect is Bearn. The greeting to the Bishop began: *Funfenek 'Garn Hirt hebe di Bearn* (May Verona have thee for shepherd fifty years); and it ended: *Ta der Guter-Heare luse ditza Gapeta un dise Luste. Ta'z sai* (May the good Lord listen to this prayer and this wish. So be it).

Visits to Belton and Highcliffe in all the beauty of an English June made the prospect of yet another summer, my eighth in succession in Egypt, a more



than ever unwelcome prospect. London at that season was also alluring to the exile. At a dinner at Lord Rothschild's I had from Milner and Neville Lyttleton interesting first-hand information from South Africa. Then there was a dinner of old East Africans with Sir Clement Hill, who was responsible for Protectorates at the Foreign Office, where I for-gathered with Sir H. Johnston, now back for good from Nyassaland, Kirk, Lugard, Vandeleur, who was killed not many weeks later in the Transvaal, and others. I also spent a lively evening at the House of Commons with a group of juniors who were known as the Hooligans by a natural association of ideas between our two great national institutions, Parliament and the Music Hall. They used to dine together every Thursday. The party that evening included Lord Percy, Lord Hugh Cecil, Winston Churchill, Ian Malcolm, and Arthur Stanley, who had retired from the diplomatic service and secured the suffrages of an indulgent constituency.

A young Egyptian friend of mine, Mohamed Mahmoud, who had just taken a good degree at Balliol, where he was very popular with his fellow-undergraduates, was anxious before taking up official work in Egypt to see something of the working of a public department in London. Lord Lansdowne was so good as to disregard all the precedents of red tape and meet my request by getting him attached for a time to the most exclusive of bureaucracies, the Treasury.

Before returning to my post I was summoned to Marlborough House, and had a long conversation

with the King, who gave me messages for my brother-in-law Eddie Wortley, recently appointed Military Attaché at Paris. He was to devote all his goodwill to maintaining the most cordial relations with the French Army. The King gave me a deplorable account of the health of the Empress Frederick, which distressed him greatly. There was a very strong affection between brother and sister. She was still able, he said, to maintain a lifelong habit and wrote to him every week in pencil. But he anticipated that the end could not be far off, and indeed I had not been back a month in Egypt when the news reached me there of her death on the 6th of August.

The tragedy of her life was great. She had brilliant intellectual gifts. But fate had willed that she should labour in a soil which was inevitably unreceptive of the seed she had to sow. Her qualities of mind and character met with little appreciation in the Germany of those days which looked for other virtues in women. With a nature which spent itself in generous sympathy she often appeared for such an able princess to be lacking in tact. She had been brought up in a home where it was the custom to be perfectly frank and open and to speak freely without a shadow of suspicion. But in the very difficult situation in which her lot was cast frankness was not always opportune. There such a natural predisposition had its grave perils. The obligation of reticence, learned by hard experience, in acute conflict with a spontaneous impulse to express her own strong feelings, led to contradic-



tions and inconsistencies which exposed her to criticism. She believed, and there was good justification for her conviction, that under the Bismarckian régime a close espionage had been exercised on all her words and acts, which made it imperative for her to be perpetually on her guard even among those who professed to be her friends. But the reserve she would have exercised broke down when her feelings were aroused and a combative instinct of frankness asserted itself. She was intolerant of meanness and vanity. With a high ideal of duty and an earnest desire to right social and traditional injustices she failed to realise how hardly in human evolution one small step is won, and how many things, desirable in the abstract, it is not given us to achieve.

A passionate love for the land of her birth which she could not conceal was accounted to her for unrighteousness. She welcomed the society of artists, historians, and poets in their palace at Berlin. But the efforts which she and the Crown Prince made to break down the iron laws of caste were wholly misunderstood, and while malicious tongues during his brief reign referred to him as the *Judenkaiser*, every blow aimed at her husband was really designed for her, the Englishwoman, who would not understand German modes of thought and aspired to teach the Fatherland a lesson. She was convinced, and here again there were good grounds for the belief, that a deliberate attempt was made to prevent the Emperor Frederick from reigning, and she felt that she stood alone in

fighting his battle and hers. Her position then was strangely pathetic and, having assisted at the last phases of its tragic development, I record with regret that, except for one or two individuals who found themselves socially almost isolated, none of those on whose loyalty she was entitled to count displayed a sense of chivalry or ventured to break a lance in her behalf.

It was a woman's verdict which suggested to me, "*Elle inspirait plus de sympathie et de pitié que de tendresse,*" and it contained a sort of half-truth. For while the wreck of all her hopes, aspirations and opportunities commanded sympathy and pity, her character was too strongly delineated. Her pride was rebellious, and there could be mutiny behind the pathos in her eyes. But she had also the power of inspiring sincere affection among the relatively few who knew her well. She was by nature shy, intensely human, and never condescending. Few women have exerted greater charm without really good looks. To myself, whom unanticipated circumstances had enabled to be perhaps a little helpful to her in a tragic hour, she was always more than gracious, almost motherly, and I preserve a face with a wistful and tender expression of kindness and sorrow in constant and affectionate memory.

Within a week three other deaths were announced. It was a curious coincidence that the veteran Sicilian statesman Crispi, and Baratieri, the unfortunate general of Adua, should have died almost simultaneously, while Prince Henry of Orleans, my old



antagonist in Abyssinia, followed them prematurely in a final adventure to the unknown.

I was now definitely offered the post of Secretary of Embassy, or Counsellor as it is now called, at Rome, and accepted it with great satisfaction. But my departure from Egypt was still to be delayed for a certain time, as Cromer, who told my wife that the only bright moments in his desperately solitary life had been the evenings he spent with us, was no longer to be a hermit in the desert, and he had called to give her the first news of his approaching marriage in October.

I was not destined to leave Cairo without a personal conflict with Wilfrid Blunt, with whom I had always up to that time maintained friendly relations. The episode which led to this conflict engaged considerable public attention and formed the subject of questions in the House of Commons. A White Paper of 47 pages containing all the relative documents was eventually issued and laid before Parliament.<sup>1</sup> It certainly offered more entertaining reading than the majority of official publications, and it also illustrated the quality which I have already criticised of wrong-headedness in Blunt's clever and often attractive personality and a certain tendency to hit below the belt. In his concluding letter to Lord Lansdowne he described the issue in question as of infinitesimal importance compared with the publicity given to it and the scandal which it had occasioned. But he overlooked the fact that this disproportionate publicity was chiefly

<sup>1</sup> Egypt No. 3 (1901).

due to his having himself addressed the public in the Press, and that before he was in possession of all the facts. Reading over the documents again after more than twenty years I am struck by the sobriety and moderation of my own comments on his attitude.

Briefly stated the facts were as follows. The officers of the 11th Hussars, who were quartered at Abassiyeh, had brought out from England six couples of hounds. On the morning of the 21st of July seven officers with one private, who acted as a whip, started from the barracks at 4 a.m., with the possible prospect of drawing a fox or a jackal during their ride along the edge of the desert. Incidentally I may mention that it was a Sunday morning. But the horses had in any case to be taken out, and it appeared that all those concerned were duly in their places at church parade at ten. Needless to say, the most was made of "foxhunting on Sunday" by those who sought to prejudice the case.

About 5 a.m. they were riding along the wall enclosing Blunt's property which, like most walls on Arab estates, was dilapidated, and had a large gap in it some 12 feet long as well as other holes. The hounds jumped over the wall, having struck a line of scent where a fox must have passed, breaking away at sunrise for the desert from the cultivated grounds to which they come in at night. Two officers with the private walked along the wall to the door, which they found closed, and then entered through the wide gap a little farther on to call the hounds off. The other officers remained outside some 70 yards away, and did not attempt to enter



the enclosure until the noise of a conflict attracted them. The riders who had gone in to withdraw the hounds had been immediately assaulted by Blunt's Bedawi stud-groom and some of his gaffirs or watchmen. They and their horses were struck with heavy sticks. Fifteen or more of Blunt's men assembled, menacing the officers and pelting them with clods of earth, while the stud-groom as ring-leader used the most abusive language. Major Rycroft, who was, during the absence on leave of Colonel Osbert Lumley, in command of the regiment, directed the officers to fall back, and, in spite of a further onslaught on one of them who tried to round up a lagging hound, exerted his authority to prevent retaliation and demanded the names of the aggressors. The only answer given was that they were all named "Blunt."

The chief offenders were, however, eventually identified by a lawyer who lived in an adjoining house. Practically no damage had been done by the involuntary trespass, and any further unfortunate consequences were avoided by the wise restraint exercised by Major Rycroft. The general officer commanding in Egypt, who was at that moment Sir Ronald Lane, referred the case to the Ministry of the Interior, which instructed the *Parquet* to investigate the matter. The result was that the chief offenders were tried and, being found guilty of assault, condemned to sentences which I regarded as somewhat too severe. They were very properly reduced on appeal.

Blunt, on receiving a first and apparently quite

inaccurate account of what had taken place, not only wrote to Lord Lansdowne complaining of the officers who had "drawn my covers," and giving credit to his servants who had only carried out his general instructions, but he sent a long letter to the *Standard*, placing the whole affair in an unwarrantable light. The hour of five on a Sunday morning was, he suggested, a favourable one for a little trespass. The night guard would then have gone off duty. The officers, approaching his wall, "put the hounds in," the master and two whips followed, and, according to his advices, hunted and killed a fox within the enclosure. The death of the fox was supplemented by the killing of a "she-jackal" reported in a letter, to which the specification of the sex gave a circumstantial air of veracity. It was afterwards ascertained to have been written by a tenant who had not been present himself on the occasion, but was in his own village a long way off. Blunt went on to insinuate that Major Rycroft, instead of claiming credit for forbearance, would have acted a more manly part by showing a better and a little longer fight, instead of which he and the officers "capitulated and then appealed to the law." After alleging that the native courts could not be expected to deal fairly with a case between a native and an English officer, he permitted himself to suggest that there was a touch of comedy in officers complaining of his servants and offering an apology for their trespass after they had been beaten on their backs and had taken a lawyer's revenge in Court.



A thorough investigation of all the circumstances, and the preparation of considered replies to Blunt's charges and insinuations, added to my work in the torrid summer. The affair was trivial enough in itself. But in his correspondence with Lord Lansdowne Blunt, who had already claimed that the story told by his men had greater probability than the report of the officers concerned, brought charges of subserviency to the British authorities against the native courts and judges which it was easy to prove were wholly unsubstantiated, while he maintained that I ought never to have allowed the case to be brought into Court.

It came out, both from evidence during the trial and from various letters to the press recording similar experiences, that this was not an isolated case of aggression by Blunt's Bedawin guards, who appeared to consider themselves outside the law. Their employer defended their attitude on the ground of the inadequacy of provision against trespass. He complained that there was no protection for any one living in the country districts of Egypt "except such force or intimidation or persuasion as he could exercise against European marauders." The answer, so far as his property was concerned, was that a coastguard post has its quarters at a spot only five minutes distant from his stables, and that there was a police station a mile away at the end of the suburban line from Cairo. Cromer, who was in England, only took part in the controversy to make some observations regarding the alleged inadequacy of the law of

trespass. He suggested that in order to protect his grounds Blunt should repair and possibly raise his garden wall.

In a final letter to Lord Lansdowne Blunt put himself more hopelessly than ever in the wrong by accusing General Lane and Mr. Machell, the Adviser to the Interior, of having tried, "with the approval of Sir Rennell Rodd, to repair the foolish position in which these young officers had placed themselves and their compromised dignity by endeavouring to get a conviction of a vindictive character against the Arabs." The only result of this somewhat offensive insinuation was a despatch from Lord Lansdowne to myself, published at the end of the White Paper, in which while signifying his entire approval of my proceedings and reports he agreed that "Mr. Blunt's observations do not require further notice or reply."

In the autumn of 1901 Arabi Pasha was allowed to return to Egypt from his long exile in Ceylon. It had been anticipated that he would sink into obscurity, but there was evidence that many of the fellaheen had continued to regard him as the champion of their class against Pashadom. The country-people and the middle class gathered in numbers at his receptions and thousands assembled to kiss his hand the first time he went to the Mosque. Arabi himself never ceased to descant on the benefits of British rule. The dream of his life had been realised under the occupation, and now he could die happy. He deplored the manner in which the British were misunderstood and calumniated, for



already in 1901 he perceived the spirit which was gaining strength. The Palace was far from pleased with the exile's popularity, and emissaries endeavoured to restrain the zeal of his visitors. The interest in Arabi, however, only lasted for a short time, as things do in Egypt which offer new excitement, and soon it died away.

About this time I paid a visit of a few days to Mahmoud Pasha Suleiman, the father of my young friend from Balliol, at his estate of Abouteeg above Assiout. The country was at its autumnal best. The basins had just been opened. With the construction of the reservoirs perennial irrigation has replaced the old flooding process, and one of the most beautiful aspects of Egypt, when great lakes of the fertilising Nile water lay between the dykes, with islands of palm groves tasselled with golden dates, will now be seen no more. It was a most enjoyable visit. Young Mohamed Mahmoud, who had made real use of his educational opportunities, impressed me with his judgments and his aspirations. He advanced rapidly in the Egyptian public service. But unfortunately, after having been quite a personality at Oxford, he encountered on returning to Egypt the problem which has never been surmounted there, presented by the broad line drawn between British and Egyptian, and though he had philosophy enough to understand the difficulty of the position it was inevitable that he should resent the distinction. Mahmoud Suleiman, though raised to the rank of Pasha, did not belong to the imported Turkish or foreign Mussulman aristoc-

racy. He enjoyed a sort of patriarchal position as the father of his people, among whom he was endeavouring to encourage arts and crafts. He had the conservative instincts of the landlord, but not to the same extent as Riaz, the old ex-Prime Minister, an ardent agriculturist but a confirmed disbeliever in modern innovations and scientific analysis. "What nonsense it is," Riaz would say, "that people should pretend that the cotton worm comes from a moth. Worms don't come from moths. Every one who knows anything is aware that the cotton worm is the result of the salt dew produced by the Suez Canal." It was to that international highway that Riaz attributed all the misfortunes of Egypt. From a certain narrow point of view there was something to be said for the theory.

After the arrival of the Cromers at the end of October I went to Alexandria to take leave of the Khedive. There had just been one of those unfortunate incidents which it seemed impossible to avoid in Egypt. When it was definitely closed the Khedive, no doubt over-persuaded by some of his pernicious counsellors, complained that a certain British official, who happened to be the most courteous of men, had not treated him with sufficient regard. He had worked himself up into an unjustifiable state of excitement and had demanded satisfaction in a manner which could not under the circumstances be accorded. Cromer, who had had to intervene to damp his ardour, was convinced that he had done so with the kindest consideration.



Such, however, was not the view taken by the Khedive, who was greatly disturbed. Their relations had inevitably remained those of pupil and schoolmaster, and I realised once more that the divergence was irremediable. My farewell interview became a very painful one. The Khedive broke down altogether in telling me his story. He said that I was the only British official with whom he had never had any disagreeable incident, and that he deeply regretted my departure.

The last week of my residence in Egypt was marked by a succession of farewell dinners which made me feel how many friends I was leaving behind. My own work of late had largely been to oil the wheels of a difficult machine which was apt to heat, to which new parts were continually being adjusted, and which ran somehow as long as an experienced engineer kept his hand on the levers. But I could not help feeling that elements of permanence and continuity were wanting, and that there was a growing danger in the indeterminate character of a régime which we were neither disposed to regularise or to terminate in any measurable time.

On the eve of my departure on the 11th of November a banquet was given in my honour, which eighty-five of the principal personages in Cairo attended. Cromer made a parting speech which was very gratifying to myself especially because of his cordial testimony to the part my wife had played in the world of Cairo. She had, since the death of the first Lady Cromer, presided

over the social life of the colony, and had made no enemies in any section. I replied as best I might. On my other side sat Carton de Wiart, the eminent advocate, who told me that Lady Anne Blunt had that day spent two hours in his office, endeavouring to discover some means of reopening the fox-hunting incident and bringing an action before the Mixed Tribunals against the officers and presumably, if possible, myself. He had had to send her away disappointed.

On the way home I was to stop in Rome, where Harrington would join Gleichen and myself. We were to endeavour to conclude an arrangement with the Italians for a frontier between the Soudan, Eritrea, and Abyssinia. Telegraph and Postal Conventions had also to be drafted. Signor Ferdinando Martini, the Governor of Eritrea, and one of the greatest living masters of his own beautiful language, met us there. We found him conciliatory. He took a broader view of questions than the permanent officials who had no local knowledge. So after ten days' hard work in Rome we concluded our business satisfactorily. This was the beginning of a long friendship with Ferdinando Martini, the value of which I learned to appreciate during the first year of the Great War, when he as Minister of the Colonies was a tower of strength in the period of hesitancy which preceded May, 1915.

I had a few weeks' leave to my credit to spend at home in the house we had acquired in Stratford Place, and there, in the first hour of the last day of 1901, a second daughter was born.



So ended my eight years in Egypt, some of which had been eventful, while none of them were lacking in interest. I had lived in close and intimate relations with a very remarkable man, to whom both my wife and I had given all our affection and regard. Cromer was never a demonstrative man, but the letter which he wrote me when he learned that I was to be transferred to Rome meant much to me. He added, "Your own dear wife will not be easy to replace. I shall miss also that blessed Francis whose presence was a ray of sunshine in my solitary and joyless life." If I quote such words here it is because they reveal a very human and endearing side of his character, which has been little known and understood. It was hard to leave him. But eight summers in succession on the Nile are many for a northerner. There was now nothing more for me to do in Egypt, and it was right that I should return to my normal work of diplomacy. After my departure from Cairo I continued to correspond with him, but I saw him comparatively seldom until after his retirement, as the periods of our leave in England did not often coincide. His health finally broke down, and he was relieved in 1907, having devoted five-and-twenty years of his life to the regeneration of Egypt.

After the titanic struggle which has recently convulsed the western world, events which loomed large in the thought of an older generation have fallen into a remoter plane, and Cromer's name is less often now on the lips of his countrymen. A new phase of evolution has manifested itself in a

country so long recalcitrant to change, and others will build for good or ill on the foundations which he laid in the land of Nile. Yet I believe that some day, when the history of his great work is honestly taught and justly weighed in Egypt, its people will realise the debt of gratitude they owe to the brain and hand which guided them from misrule and chaos to redemption and hope, and that in process of time his figure will stand out in no less strong relief to their moral perception than the granite effigies of ancient Egypt on the cliffs of Nubia do to the material eye. It has been my special aim in this volume to recall certain intimate memories of a great man whose character and personality become ever more impressive to me as the years of our association recede into the past.

They that dig foundations deep  
Fit for realms to rise upon,  
Little honour do they reap  
Of their generation,  
Any more than mountains gain  
Stature till we reach the plain.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The Proconsuls*.



# INDEX

- Abbas Hilmi, Khedive, 2-4, 6, 88, 100,  
 266; visit to England, 275-9,  
 283-7, 295, 308  
 Abdul Hamid, Sultan, 10, 92, 103,  
 282-7  
 Abou Hamed, 48, 105, 190  
 Abou Simbel, 269  
 Aboukir, 82  
 Abyssinia, Italian defeat in, 85; British  
 Mission to, 110-23, Chs. IV and V,  
 237, 242, 310  
 Acrocorinth, 242  
 Addis Abbaba, 147-9; departure from,  
 176  
 Aden, 120  
 Aden Horse, 121, 149  
 Adua, battle of, 86, 112, 128, 142, 158  
 Akasheh, 87, 93  
 Ambascié, Ito, 140, 144, 178  
 Ambigol, 99  
 Amharic language, 172  
 Andros, 81  
 Anglo-Congolese Treaty (1894), 230,  
 235  
 Anglo-German Convention (Africa,  
 1890), 229  
 Anglo-Italian Agreement (1891), 230  
 Ankoher, 148, 160  
 Arab press, 100, 192, 249  
 Arabi Pasha, 69; trial, 71, 306  
 Armenian massacres, 103  
 Arms in Abyssinia, 160, 166  
 Assouan, 77, 79  
 Atbara, R., 89, 190; battle of the, 201,  
 206  
 Athens, 292  
 Bahr-el-Ghazal, province, 230, 232, 235  
 Baird, Sir Alexander, 68  
 — Sir John, 107, 254  
 Baker, Colonel Valentine, 46  
 Balfour, Gerald, 98  
 Banquets in Abyssinia, 156  
 Baratieri, General, 86, 128, 158, 300  
 Battenberg, Prince Louis of, 84  
 Beatty, Lieut., 105, 197  
 Beecher, Harriet Ward, viii  
 Berber, 108, 190, 197  
 Beresford, Lord Charles, 68, 79, 253, 291  
 Berthelot, M., 92, 234  
 Bingham, Captain, Hon. C. 115, 122, 143  
 Bismarck, Prince, 34, 106, 149, 202  
 — Ot. Herbert, 34  
 Biya Kaboba, 127  
 Blunt, Wilfrid, 68-75, 301-6  
 — Lady Anne, 72, 310  
 Bonvalot, M., 113, 140, 151-2, 159  
 Boutros Ghali Pasha, 33, 50, 53  
 Boyle, Harry, 29, 56, 79, 246  
 Brazza, M. de, 230, 233  
 "Breath of the King," 149, 153  
 British troops in Soudan campaign, 195,  
 197, 204-6  
 Broadley, 71  
 Brougham, Lord, viii  
 Browning, Robert, 45  
 Brussels Act, 144, 156  
 Budge, Sir W., 154  
 Burleigh, Bennet, 200  
 Burne-Murdoch, Colonel, 92  
 Butcher, Dean, 79  
 Butler, General Sir W., 47, 82  
 Byron relics, 239  
 Caisse de la Dette, 88, 91, 109  
*Cambrian*, H.M.S., 84  
 Cameron Highlanders, 75  
 Carter-Wilson, 40  
 Carytena, 290  
 Cassel, Sir Ernest, 200, 253  
 Cecil, Lord Edward, 115, 122, 149  
 Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. J., 87, 97  
 Chercher, province, 142  
 China, siege of Legations, 190, 279  
 Christian Victor, Prince, 293  
 Churches in Abyssinia, 136  
 Churchill, Lord Randolph, 27  
 — Winston, 200, 297  
 Clairmont, 289  
 Clarence, Duchy of, 289  
 Clochette, M., 158, 159, 166  
 Cogordan, M., 66, 96  
 Colville, Commander, 105  
 Congo, French, 231  
 — State, 230, 236  
 Courcel, Baron de, 235-6  
 Crispi, Sr., 86, 300  
 Cromer, Earl of, 1-30, 50-2, 55-61, 85-  
 90, 97, 194-202, 205, 212, 240, 245,  
 280, 293, 301, 307-9, 311  
 — Ethel, Lady, 20, 202, 205, 239-41  
 Currie, Lord, 260-2, 274, 283

- Curtis, Daniel, 44, 94  
   — Ralph, 44  
 Curzon, Marquess, 112, 203, 244  
 Cust, H., 78, 200  
  
 Dance of priests in Abyssinia, 170  
 Dawkins, Sir Clinton, 31, 80, 82, 203  
 Delcassé, M., 222, 228-37  
 Deloncle, M., 101, 258  
 Delphi, 291  
 Dervishes, menace to Italy, 85; war  
   with Abyssinia (1889), 111; Mis-  
   sion to Menelik, 160, 171.  
 Devonshire, Duke of, 90  
 Dhoolies, 120, 138  
 Dongola, 85-7, 89; occupation of, 105  
 Drummers, Abyssinian, 150, 176  
 Drummond-Wolff, Sir H., 9, 12  
   — — Convention, 10, 13  
 Dufferin, Earl of, 46  
 Dufle, 241  
 Duse, Signora, 274  
  
 Edward VII, 298  
 Eetvelde, M. van, viii  
 Entotto, 148, 169  
 Eritrea, 259  
 Esa Somalis, 130  
 Ethiopia (*see* Abyssinia), 114; ancient  
   limits of, 167  
 Eugénie, Empress, viii  
  
 Fantalle, Mt., 144, 146  
 Fashoda, 188, 221-5; issue between  
   French and British Governments,  
   229-38, 241  
 Findlay, Captain, 201  
 Firket, battle at, 97  
 Fitaurari, 142  
 Forster, 40  
 Frederick, Empress, 186, 292, 298-300  
 Frere, Sir Bartle, 257  
 Freycinet, M. de, 12  
  
 Galioub, 192  
 Gallas, 131, 146, 160, 178  
 Gallwey, General Sir T., 263  
 Garstin, Sir W., 40, 107, 252, 268  
 Gatacre, General, 196  
 Gébi, 149; lunch at the, 156, 175  
 Gedid, battle of, 225, 267  
 Gildessa, 130, 183-4  
 Girouard, Bimbashi, 104  
 Gladstone, W. E., 17, 58, 103, 202, 257  
 Gleichen, Major Count, 115, 122, 127,  
   143, 183, 292, 310  
 Gordon, General, 16, 48  
  
 Gorst, Sir Eldon, 31, 248, 280  
 Granby, Marchioness of, 43  
 Greece, visits to, 80-2, 288-92  
 Greeks in Egypt, 259, 288  
 Grenfell, Sir Francis, 195, 244  
   — Lieut. Robert, 208, 218  
 Grey, Sir Edward, 232  
  
 Hamadeb, 270  
 Hanotaux, M., 92, 222, 230-1, 234-6  
 Haramaya, Lake, 139  
 Harrar, 112, 134-8, 181  
 Harrington, Lieut., 121-2, 181, 186,  
   195, 310  
 Harrison, Colonel, 53-5, 244  
 Hawash, R., 142, 145, 178  
 Hayes Sadler, Colonel, 120, 185  
 Heidler von Egeregg, Baron, 67  
 Henry, Prince, of Orleans, 113, 128,  
   139, 151-3, 177, 231, 300  
   — — of Prussia, 198  
 Herbet, M., 12  
 Herbin, M., 48  
 Heyking, Baron v., 7-9  
 Hewett, Admiral Sir W., 110, 163  
 Hicks-Beach, Sir M., 280  
 Hill, Sir Clement, 297  
 Holker, Sir J., viii  
 Hooligans, 297  
 Howard, Hubert, 207, 209  
 Howe, Julia Ward, viii  
 Hunter, General Sir A., 201  
 Hussars, 11th, 302  
  
 Ibrahim Pasha, 32  
 Ilg, M., 147, 151, 163, 168, 176  
   — Madame, 153, 176  
 Indian troops for Suakin, 94  
 Inger, Carl, 184  
 Ismail Bey Sadyk, 25  
 Ismail Pasha, Khedive, 21-7  
 Italian prisoners in Abyssinia, 126, 128,  
   134, 158  
 Italian Red Cross, 127, 134  
  
 Jaalin tribe, 206, 208  
 Jackson, Colonel, 225  
 Jebel Surgham, 214-5  
 Jibuti, 112, 113, 118; railway project,  
   159, 188  
 John, King of Tigré, 110, 156, 164  
 Johnston, Sir H., 297  
 Joseph, Gerasmach, 147, 150  
 Jubilee, second, 186  
  
 Kafa, 134



- Kanyasmach, 132  
 Kassala, 85, 89, 193, 250  
 Kenna, Lieut., 211, 218-9  
 Keppel, Commander Colin, 197  
 Kerr, Lieut. Mark, 84  
 Khaled, Seyyid, 102  
 Khalifa, 208, 213, 220, 250, 270  
 Khalig, cutting the, 83  
 Khartoum, 48, 109, 168, 188, 210, 270  
 Kipling, Rudyard, 42, 312  
 Kirk, Sir J., 34  
 Kitchener Pasha, Sir H. Sirdar, 2, 5,  
 34-9, 59, 85, 89, 93, 97; at Don-  
 gola, 104; at Omdurman, 208-10;  
 at Fashoda, 221-5, 240, 247-52,  
 255, 263, 267, 271  
 Knowles, General, 90  
 Kokreb, 86  
 Koyander, M., 67  
 Kunni, 142  
  
 "Lady," 254, 268, 270  
 Laga Hardim, 143  
 Lagarde, M., 113, 140, 141, 158, 159  
 Lancers, 21st, 75, 205, 211, appendix  
 on p. 213  
 Lansdowne, Marquess of, 294, 304-6  
 Le Gallais, Colonel, 293  
 Léontieff, 113, 151, 157  
 Lewis, Colonel, 197  
 Liotard, M., 230, 232-4  
 Long, Colonel, 197  
 Lucinge, Prince de, 139  
 Lyttelton, General Hon. Neville, 205  
  
 Macdonald, Colonel Hector, 197, 210,  
 256  
 — General, Sir James, 187  
 Mad Mullah, 189  
 Mafeking, 274  
 Mahaffy, Professor, 76  
 Mahdi's tomb, 251  
 Mahmoud Damad Pasha, 282  
 Mahmoud, Emir, 201, 206  
 Mahmoud, Mohamed, 297  
 Mahmoud Suleiman Pasha, 307  
 Mahon, Colonel, 256, 274  
 Makunnen, Ras, 128, 132-9, 169, 181-3  
 Malet, Sir E., 12, 60, 69-71  
 Malortie, Baron, 65  
 Managasha, Mt., 149, 159  
 Mangasha, Ras, 151  
 Marchand, Captain, 159, 188, 205,  
 222-38, 241-2  
 Maria Theresa dollars, 119  
 Martini, Ferdinando, 310  
  
 Martyr, Major, 241  
 Massawah, 164  
 Mathios, Bishop, 153, 160, 170, 175  
 Maxwell, General Sir John, 39, 41, 47,  
 197, 242, 263  
 Menelik II, Emperor of Abyssinia, 110,  
 111, 147, 150, 154, 156-8, 162-76,  
 168, 199  
 Metternich, Count Paul, 66  
 Mikhail, Ras, 171  
 Milner, Viscount, 14, 15  
 Mitchell-Innes, Alfred, 49  
 Mixed tribunals, 108  
 Mohamed Ali, Khedive, 32  
 Moncrieff, Sir Colin Scott, 40  
 Money, Sir Alonzo, 292  
 Monson, Sir Edmund, 222, 232  
 Montazah, 275, 307  
 Monteil, Colonel, 231-2  
 Montmorency, Lieut. R. de, 211, 213-  
 20  
 Morley, Viscount, 251  
 Mouktar Pasha, 9, 10, 103  
 Muir, Surgeon-General, 239  
 Müller, F. von, 66  
 Mustapha Fehmy Pasha, 50  
 Mustapha Kamel, 101  
  
 Napoleon III, viii  
 Nason Bey, 202  
 Nauplia, 291  
 Nerazzini, Major, 178  
 Neufeld, Charles, 209  
 Nile, Abyssinian ambitions on, 168,  
 171; French door to, 230-5  
 Nile reservoirs, 87, 199, 248  
 Nubar Pasha, 8, 31-3, 42, 50, 252  
 Nubia, 269  
  
 Olympia, 290  
 Omdurman, 77; battle of, 207-12;  
 Appendix to Ch. VI  
 Orleans, *see* Henry Prince of  
 Oscar, King of Sweden, 258  
 Osman Digna, 256, 266  
 Owen, Roddy, 94-6, 98  
  
 Paget, Captain Alfred, 267  
 Palmer, Sir Elwin, 30, 89, 109  
 Pansa, Senatore, 66  
 Patriarchate of Alexandria, 288  
 Phylæ, 79  
 Pinching Bey (Sir Horace), 97, 115, 122,  
 128, 137, 153, 157, 180  
 Piræus, 80  
 Poncins, Vicomte de, 151

- Portal, Sir Gerald, 42, 111  
 Prince of Wales (King Edward), 275  
 Queen of Sheba, 111, 175  
 Queen Victoria, 277-8; death, 294  
 Raguel, St., 169  
 Ralli, P., 5  
 Ramleh, 3, 7, 82  
 Religious art in Abyssinia, 136  
 Reverseau, Marquis de, 66  
 Rhodes, Colonel Frank, 206, 208, 274  
 R'hotta tribe, 131, 179  
 Riaz Pasha, 31, 308  
 Roberts, Field-Marshal Earl, 263  
 Rogers, Sir John, 97  
 Rosebery, Earl of, 103, 232  
 Rumbold, Sir Horace, 49  
 Rundle, General, Sir Leslie, 5, 39, 46, 85  
 Russians in Abyssinia, 113  
 Rycroft, Major, 303  
 Salis, Count de, 49  
 Salisbury, Marquess of, 187, 189, 213, 226, 232, 242, 253, 264, 276, 293  
 Salon, Maître, 41  
 Sayce, Professor, 68  
 Scott, Sir John, 41  
 Seaforth Highlanders, 75  
 Semon, Sir F., 277  
 Senoussi sect, 73-5  
 Sermoneta, Duke of, 86  
 Shablouka, 206  
 Shahin, George, 115  
 Shoa, Kingdom of, 110, 143  
 Sinadino, Ambroise, 65, 259  
 Siwa, 73  
 Slatin Pasha, 77-9, 91  
 Sobat R., 242  
 Somali Protectorate, 112, 114, 118, 167, 181, 189  
 Soudan, Reconquest policy, 87, 248, 265; Wingate's administration, 273  
 South African War, 256-9, 263, 268, 293  
 Speedy, Captain, 115, 122, 133, 140  
 Spring Rice, Sir Cecil, 292  
 Steevens, George, 200, 293  
 Stewart, Major, 47  
 Strachey, Lytton, 16  
 — J. St. Loe, 68  
 Stuart-Wortley, Major Hon. E., 35, 46, 48, 206, 208, 298  
 Suakin, 85, 93, 266  
 Swayne, Colonel, 115, 118, 122, 130, 143, 163, 184  
 Systrum, 170  
 Taitu, Empress of Abyssinia, 119, 154, 175  
 Talbot, General Hon. Sir R., 245, 295  
 Tantah, 83  
 Tej, 133, 156  
 Tewfik Pasha, Khedive, 12, 28, 71  
 Thaurin, Monseigneur, 137, 183  
 Theodore, King of Tigré, 110  
 Thermia, 81  
 Tigrane Pasha, 33  
 Tobe, or toga, 132  
 Touching for snakebites, 157  
 Treaty with Ethiopia, 171, 175  
 Turkhana tribe, 253  
 Ubanghi, Upper, 113, 230  
 Ucciali, Treaty of, 111, 164, 168  
 Uganda, 188  
 Venice in 1894, 45, 295  
 Verona, 295  
 Villehardouins in Greece, 288  
 Violet Fane, 260-2  
 Visconti-Venosta, Marchese, 262  
 Vlacherna, 289  
 Wady Halfa, 79, 94, 105  
 Wafa-el-Nil, 84  
 Waldo Haimanaut, 117, 150, 163  
 Warabod, 126  
 War Office, 90, 93  
 Webster, Sir R., viii  
 Wellby, Captain, 253  
 Wilcocks, Sir W., 40  
 William II, German Emperor, 198, 210, 295  
 Windsor, visits to, 187, 278  
 Wingate, General Sir R., 39, 77, 85, 110, 139, 163, 180, 184, 187, 245, 255, 265, 273, 276  
 Wolseley, General Lord, 49, 87  
 Wood, General Sir Evelyn, 2, 35, 46  
 Zaluski, Count, 52  
 Zanzibar, 34, 101, 102, 229  
 Zea, 81  
 Zeila, 118, 120, 166



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## AUTUMN

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